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SCRIPTURAL PIETY:

AN EXTRACT FROM REAL LIFE.

BY THE

REV. CHARLES AUGUSTUS THURLOW, M. A.
VICAR OF SCALBY.

"Blessed are they that hear the word
of God and keep it"—Luke xi, 28.

— Second Edition.

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ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.

SCRIPTURAL PIETY.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION—RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE.

When our Blessed Lord and Saviour wished to point out one of the most wonderful things which He had brought to pass in this world, He said “The poor have the Gospel preached to them.” MAT. xi, 5.

The Religion of Jesus Christ is good and merciful to all persons, but it is especially the friend of the poor. Thus it is that one day of sacred rest is set apart every week, when the labourer ceases from his toil, and has time to

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think about his soul and prepare for Heaven. Then the house of God is open to him, where he can go and pray, and hear the word of his Heavenly Father read, explained, and preached. He may also buy very cheaply, or perhaps obtain as a gift, his best adviser and companion, the Holy Bible. And if he lives in a very favoured place, some good person may visit him at his own house, and leave small books, full of useful instruction. If himself, or any of his family, is sick, they will be attended to; and his little children sent to school, to be brought up according to the commandment, "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." EPH. vi, 4.

All these and many other such blessings were never known or thought of before the blessed Gospel of the Son of God began to be preached in the world. The poor enjoy none of these benefits in any country where Christianity is not known; and they generally experience the greatest measure of these blessings in those places where God has been pleased to cause the light of His Truth to shine the brightest.

It would be very well if all persons remembered always how much they owe, even here upon earth, to that blessed religion which the Divine Redeemer has brought to them. And particularly let any humble inhabitant of the lowest cottage read these gracious words which the Holy Spirit ordered the Apostle to write—“Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him!” James, ii, 5. Oh! what compassion is there in God, who not only sends His own Son to seek for and save His poor creatures; but also looks into every ones case, considers their trials, temptations, and wants, and then puts down in His own book the promises which He knows they will most need!

This holy Scripture seems like a light breaking forth in the midst of darkness, sent to give comfort to the burthened heart; and to cheer with hope the forlorn and miserable scenes where sickness, sorrow, and death prevail. There are many, no doubt, on whom these words of

God have been fulfilled; some still journeying onward, others passed to their rest. Frequently the heirs of the kingdom of Heaven, are little noticed upon earth: it is however very useful and encouraging when we can discover any humble follower of the Saviour, who, though wishing to escape observation, still is causing that light to shine before men, which glorifies our Heavenly Father." MAT. v, 16.

The following little history, and the reflections which accompany it, relate to a poor widow, who little thought that any thing she said or did would ever be read by others; but the Scriptures of God are often wonderfully verified. In MAT. vi, 3, it is written "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, Himself shall reward thee openly."

Now this poor woman, was first made known to the Clergyman of a certain town in Yorkshire, - (who supplied the following particulars) in this

manner. She called early one morning at his house, and requested the servant to take to her master a sovereign, for the benefit of that most excellent Society, which sends out Clergymen and other christian teachers to instruct the poor Heathen in the way of Salvation. When asked her name, she declined to give it, and seemed so desirous not to be noticed, that she was allowed to depart. As soon, however, as the good lady of the Clergyman received the message, she endeavoured to find out where her dwelling was, and there she went to visit her. The humble woman seemed quite surprised that a lady should take any interest in her little affairs, and very properly she tried not to talk about herself. At last, very slowly, and almost unwillingly, she answered the many kind enquiries put to her. Her history was short and simple: she had been a servant in the family of a relative of the lady who now called upon her: during her service she had been very prudent, and had saved a small sum of money, the interest of which, allowed her, now in her old age, four shillings a week. From service she married a seaman, but she had been left a widow

for some years: she had two sons, one still living in the Isle of Shetland with his family, the other very lately deceased. She herself resided in a small room in an Alms-house or Hospital for Seamen's widows. From this charity, she only derived the benefit of her lodging; she subsisted on her own little saving mentioned above. Her room was remarkable for its cleanliness and order, as well as poverty. Her dress was the very humblest, mended and patched all over; but yet so clean and neat, as to prove that her poor appearance was not the effect of negligence, idleness, or waste, but of carefulness and frugality. She was so modest and so unwilling to speak about herself, that many visits were required, before her interesting character was discovered. The few fragments which had been preserved may serve to shew forth that godly simplicity, which is the best and rarest form of True Religion.

The principles and conduct of Christians depend very much upon the manner in which their religious knowledge is obtained. It will therefore be interesting first to notice by what means this

disciple of her Saviour was instructed, and how she came to think, feel, and act so correctly and scripturally as she did. She lived quite alone: her frequent expression was, "you see madam I am a lonely woman." It never seemed to have occurred to her as a thing possible, that any one should wait on her to teach her at home. Accordingly in all weather, and at all seasons, she regularly attended the divine services which were performed by the Clergyman, both on week-days and Sundays in the chapel and work-house. And when she had thus waited upon God, according to his commandment, she returned home directly, and there all quiet and alone, she tried to recollect what she had heard; turning to the holy scriptures which had been explained or preached upon; striving to understand them thoroughly, and apply them to her own case. In this she followed a good example: for Acts xvii, 11, some of the first and best christians are related "to have received the word with all readiness of mind, and to have searched the Scriptures daily," and thus "many of them believed." It was not only after she had been hearing, but often and

regularly did she study the blessed word of God; and she found as the Apostle wrote, that word “able to make her wise unto salvation.” In her studies she would often meet with many things hard to be understood; but as she was both humble and faithful, this did not offend or discourage her. St. Paul told her that “the things of the spirit of God are spiritually discerned,” 1 Cor. ii, 14. And St. James gave her these comfortable words, “if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” JAMES, i, 5.

Thus by diligent study, and by praying earnestly, that the Holy Spirit of God would be pleased to open her mind, and make her to understand, feel, and obey, what she both heard and read; “she grew in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.”

When the glorious God humbles Himself to teach us poor creatures, He says “therefore shall ye lay up these my words *in your heart, and in*

your soul. DEUT. xi. 18. And accordingly David declared “Thy word have I hid *in my heart*, that I might not sin against Thee.” Ps. cxix, 11. And thus also did this pious woman seem really to have embraced the truth with joy, and to have laid up the words of God within her inmost heart. Her state was truly happy, for her single desire was to learn and do the will of her unseen and divine Lord; therefore she did not draw attention towards herself, but continued her quiet way, as she desired, without noise or even observation. Her religious conversation was with God; in Him she found the wisest councillor and the most constant friend; always present, always kind, both willing and able to assist her in every temptation, and comfort her in every sorrow. Knowing by experience the blessed privilege of communion with God, she constantly waited upon Him in His own house: and while listening to the instruction of His ordained minister, and offering her supplications and praise “in the midst of the congregation,” she found His promise true, “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.” Is. xl, 31. And then in private, while declaring

her wants, confessing her sins, asking pardon, and imploring grace in lonely and fervent prayer, she experienced the comfort of that scripture, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." JOHN, xvi, 32.

These feelings and views she plainly expressed, though, as always, very slowly and humbly.

When she was assured that the pious Clergyman would have been most ready to visit her occasionally, she seemed quite surprised at the mention of such a favour; she also gave three remarkable reasons why she had never requested him to call, but had endeavoured to go on her own way, through the assistance of the public services, and her private devotions.

"A Clergyman's time," she said, "is very precious; he has so many great and difficult duties to perform, that no one should ever interrupt him without a very strong reason. Now I enjoy the great benefit of his public instructions several times a week; this ought to be enough; and if I

take him away to call upon me, he must leave something which is more necessary, undone. It is always my duty to wait upon him, but I cannot expect, nor do I wish him to wait upon me." These reflections would naturally arise in the mind of this humble and diligent christian; and they deserve general attention. It should however be observed, that pastoral visits are not only useful, but very necessary; and if real improvement be desired, the Clergyman and his parishioners may derive from them mutual benefit; only let care be taken that these visits are conducted on a right principle.

This good woman had learned from her Bible to look upon the office of a minister of the Church with affection and respect. She read there that they are to be accounted "Ambassadors of Christ, and Stewards of the mysteries of God." In St. Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians, v, 12, she found this charge: "We beseech you brethren, to know them which labour amongst you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly for their works' sake." But reverence for her minister was

also joined to a proper regard for the wants of her neighbours; she seemed so unwilling to fill up any of the valuable time which some one else might need more than herself, that it appeared as if she had been meditating upon these words of the Apostle to the Philippians, ii, 4. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." She was more anxious to do good than "to get good," to send help to the needy, than secure it for herself. She might remember that remarkable saying of our Lord, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts, xx, 35.

Her second reason was no less striking than the former, and was expressed nearly in these words.

"I feel," she said, "that God has been very gracious to me—I have so many opportunities of receiving good instructions. How many Sundays, how many week-days have I been allowed to hear the word of God read and preached; and yet I am not what I should be, nor what I might have

been—I ought to know more, and be far better than I am, after all the pains that have been taken about such a poor creature. But if, besides all that has been done for me in public, I receive instructions in private, I am afraid I shall never be able to give a good account of so many blessings. I wish I could think I had improved all that I have heard in the Church—I must try and make a better use of what I have already before I ask for any thing besides; I am sure I am unworthy of any more goodness.” And thus did this simple woman prove her belief in those words of the Lord, “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required, LUKE, xii, 48. and shewed in a very interesting manner, her lowly opinion of herself, and the extraordinary tenderness of her conscience.

The third reason was entirely her own, and to be duly felt should have been heard from her own lips. I should not be able,” she said, “to speak properly to a minister of the Gospel. If he asked me any thing, perhaps I could not answer, and I should be always afraid of saying

something wrong; but I have read in this Bible that God has sent His own Son, to seek and save such poor sinners as myself; and so I hope I may even tell Him what I need, and ask Him in my poor way, to teach me better, and to forgive me when I ask amiss." Surely this faithful woman had been taught from above, that she had an "High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, passed into the Heavens, touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and therefore she should come boldly to the throne of grace, that she might obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." HEB iv, 16.

We have every reason to hope that where there is an *humble and earnest desire to serve God*, that He will give us all necessary instruction; "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in behalf of those whose *heart is perfect* toward Him." 2 CHR. xvi, 9. Our gracious Saviour says expressly, "*whosoever shall do the will of God* shall know of the doctrine." JOHN, vii, 17. And when St. Paul begins to preach

and invite people to be Christians, he says. "Whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent." ACTS, xiii, 26. Indeed the Son of God does not hesitate to add, "whosoever shall do the will of my Father, which is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." MAT. xii, 50.

According to such promises, this simple woman learnt those precious truths which "make us wise unto Salvation." She knew the beginning of true religion to be this: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting Life." God sent not His Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. Yet, alas! He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not, He came unto His own and His own received Him not. JOHN iii, 16, 17., & i, 10.

How then can it be that mankind refuse to receive their best friend? Why even St. Paul says, "I know that in me, (that is in my flesh,)

dwelleteth no good thing." ROM. vii, 18. And where did the Apostle learn this? In his Bible, by experience, and from his own heart. Above five thousand years ago "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually." GEN, vi. 5. Then again, about two thousand eight hundred and fifty years ago, "The Lord looked down from Heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. But they were all gone aside, they were altogether become filthy, there was none that did good, no not one." PSAL, xiv, 2, 3. And then the Apostle considers it necessary to repeat the same serious words, ROM. iii, 10. about one thousand eight hundred years ago, and to add something more to the sad description; as if to prove that the character of mankind was not altered for the better, but rather for the worse, as days and years rolled away.

Yet though we were always sinners and enemies, Jesus Christ resolved from the first that He would come to be our Saviour; and He

repeated this promise by His prophets, and in other ways. And at last in due time, the glorious Son of God became the Son of man. He lived a perfect life without any sin; yet He suffered exceeding and unknown afflictions. “He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Is. liii. 3, 4, 5, 6. And when the most blessed Saviour humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” PHIL. ii, 8. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them. 2 COR. v. 19. And “having made peace through the blood of the cross, by Christ, He hath reconciled all things unto Himself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.” COL. i, 20.

But this is not all; our gracious Redeemer not only dies for us, but also rises again with His

body from the tomb in which it was laid, and thus He conquers our great enemy. And then He ascends up with His human nature to the very presence of God; and He obtains for us, a most precious blessing, which He often promised. Thus the Holy Spirit comes forth to help us, and when any one is to be saved, that blessed Being causes the soul to be born again. JOHN, iii, 3. And "being turned from darkness to light, and made new creatures," we are placed, as it were, in the way of salvation.

All these doctrines this pious woman learnt from her Bible; and her own conscience bore witness of their truth. Then again she read, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, God saveth us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." TIT. iii, 5, 6. "For by grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." EP. ii, 8, 9. Yet though she felt all this to be the truth, she was not the less but more anxious and delighted to do

every good thing. Indeed it could not be otherwise, for “the love of Christ constrained her;” and the Holy Spirit inclined and helped her; and so she delighted in the service of God. “Being made free from sin, and become the servant of God, she had her fruit unto holiness. ROM. vi, 22. She was in that delightful state “that she felt the love of God to consist in keeping His commandments, and she found His commandments not to be grievous.” 1 JOHN, v, 3. She knew “that they which have believed in God ought to be careful to maintain good works.” TITUS, iii, 8. And her own heart responded to those Scriptures which told her that “the Saviour loved her and gave Himself for her, that He might redeem her from all iniquity, and purify her unto Himself, as one of His peculiar people, zealous of good works.” TITUS, ii, 14. And thus she was not satisfied with doing a little now and then for her Lord. “Unto her much had been forgiven and much given, and therefore she loved much,” and considered her whole life as the property of God.

She had happily learned both to believe and rejoice in those inspired words, "Christ died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again. 2 Cor. v, 15. "Ye are not your own for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Cor. vi, 19, 20.

Such were the religious principles of this simple christian; and her piety was shewn directly in her conduct. It never seemed to occur to her that the truths of God could be received and not obeyed. In her case there was a close, and as it were, a natural connexion between faith and practice. Just as an infant who is well throws about his arms and legs and shows his health by his activity, so did she prove her creed by her conduct. The one followed the other as a matter of course. Neither the infant nor herself argue about it; I believe so and so, and I must do so and so: but as a good tree *will* bring forth good fruit, so true religion *must* produce holy dispositions and virtuous actions. It was observed in her, that she

had no idea in her mind, like believing and not doing. Such a notion as profession without practice, never seemed to have occurred to her simple heart. Indeed the profession she made was chiefly that of the pious Elizabeth, "she walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless." LUKE, i, 6. And her diffidence and humility induced her to conceal those virtues which, for the sake of others, we could wish had been more fully known. There are, however, a few remarkable and interesting features in her character that should be noticed, as they serve to shew the nature of "pure and undefiled religion." The principles were hidden in her heart; they were discovered and proved by the plain and certain evidences of her thoughts and feelings, words and actions.

CHAPTER II.

SIMPLICITY—HUMILITY.

We may first observe her *simplicity*. How very earnestly does our Lord speak upon this subject! “Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of God.” MAT. xiii, 3. Our natural character, especially when we have been long practiced in the world, is any thing but simple and child-like, it is often very deep, contriving, suspicious, and false. Our Saviour says this must be quite altered if we hope to be admitted to heaven. It seemed that this happy change had taken place in this good woman; she saw truths and duties in a plain and clear manner, and as soon as she discovered them, she

tried directly, and without changing them at all, to follow and fulfil them. There was not any thing like double dealing either in her mind or in her conduct; no attempt to deceive herself or to deceive others; all was straightforward, upright, and sincere. This was seen in many little things, (for it is the small matters which occur every day, that try peoples' character) and it will be discovered in many of her answers and conduct mentioned above, and afterwards.

This child-like conduct was particularly shewn in her innocent reliance upon the word of God. She was asked whether she was not sometimes tried and tempted, and whether she did not find it very difficult to continue in the narrow way of life. She answered that certainly sometimes she was cast down, and almost inclined to fear that she might be forsaken. Then after a short pause, laying her hand upon the open Bible, she added "But this is God's *own word*; we must not doubt what the Lord says: surely it would be *a sin* to disbelieve what He Himself promises." And so her faith and hope seemed to revive again.

Now in this there was no argument, no long reasoning; she did not want all the discussions of learned men to strengthen her trust in God. "Perfect love casteth out fear." 1 John, iv, 18. "He that believeth on the son of God, hath the witness in himself." 1 JOHN, v, 10. "As a new-born-babe she desired the sincere milk of the word, and she grew thereby." 1 PETER, ii, 2. She took the scriptures in their plain literal meaning; she loved God and heartily strived to serve Him; she was earnest in prayer, and diligent in her obedience to His commands. Her conscience bore witness that she was sincere. God therefore might bless her with peace of mind—and she could read, "The Lord is faithful, Who shall establish you and keep you from all evil." 2 THES. iii, 3. And she might meditate on those consolatory words with which St. Jude ends his Epistle. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy. To the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever, Amen."

In this and other instances, she shewed that she had prayed for and received that “single eye” so much commended by our Lord. And if any one, observing her calm and peaceful manner, had enquired, “How can these things be?” she might almost have answered in the very words of St. Paul, 2 Cor. i, 12. “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and Godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.”

We should next observe her *humility*—This was shewn in the very looks and manners of this true follower of the Lord. From her lips “boasting was excluded.” And she formed so low an opinion of herself, that a little attention or kindness from any one, seemed quite to surprise her:—While in the presence of God, or whenever she alluded to her religious state, she spoke and acted as a penitent and a sinner. Now this was a very needful, perhaps the most needful part of the Christian character, which was to be formed of her: for let us remember what the glorious

God solemnly affirms. “Thus saith the High and Lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the High and Holy place, *with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.*” ISAIAH, lvii, 15. This temper of mind was also chosen by our Saviour, out of all the other graces which adorned His own character, and it was formally proposed to His Disciples for their imitation, when he uttered those kind words: “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest: take *my* yoke upon you and *learn of me*, for I am *meek and lowly in heart*, and ye shall find *rest* unto your souls.” MAT. xi, 28, 29.

Indeed the Apostle recommends Christians “to be clothed with humility,” to put it on as their dress and ornament; adding, for “God resi stet the proud and giveth grace to the humble.” 1 PET. v, 5. Now poor people are often very proud: and some that think themselves religious, shew plainly, that they have not learned this first lesson of their Saviour. The writer has met with more persons than one, who could talk very boldly

about what they called knowing God, and the work of grace, when alas! there was too much reason to recall those words of the Apostle, "their foolish heart was darkened." ROM. i, 21. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him." PROV. xxvi, 12. So also, instead of being thankful for any favor they may receive, many poor people seem to care little or nothing about it; and take the benefits that are freely bestowed, as if they were a right. True Christians never do this; they know themselves, and know what they deserve. Where there is pride, we may be sure there is ignorance—wherever there is the best knowledge, there is found humility.

The good woman whose character we are now examining, had learned that she was a sinner: and this truth being in her heart, it made her have very lowly feelings about herself in all respects. Any thing seemed to her good enough, and more than she deserved: thus she was contented and grateful, and "humbling herself under the mighty hand of God, she could cast all her

care upon Him." She found this disposition accompanied with many blessings, and that promise so remarkably repeated, (viz. 1 PET. iv, 5, and JAMES iv, 6.) "God giveth grace to the humble," was verified in her; for "though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the *lowly*," and the "*meek* He *will guide* in judgment; *the meek* He *will teach His way.*" PSALM, cxxxviii, 6—xxv, 9.

CHAPTER III.

INDUSTRY—ORDER—CLEANLINESS—ECONOMY.

Another interesting feature in the christian character of this good woman appeared one day, when she was found mending some very old and torn clothes; she was asked if they were her own, and other kind questions were put to her about her poverty; when at last it was discovered that she was constantly in the habit of filling up all her spare time in knitting stockings, or patching and arranging the ragged dresses of some children of a poor neighbour. When she was pressed on this point, she confessed that she considered it a bounden duty to be usefully employed; indeed her strong expressions shewed that she *felt idleness to be a very great sin.*

Any one who knows the Bible well, will immediately think of that excellent person named Dorcas, at whose death there was so much sorrow, while "the widows stood by weeping and showing the coats and garments which she made while she was with them. ACTS ix, 30. Dorcas was indeed raised by the power of God entrusted to St. Peter. We hope that she, with one who followed her example, will obtain "a better resurrection," in that day when such good and faithful works will be remembered: for though here "they were not recompensed, they shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. LUKE xiv, 14. We must not however suppose, that these willing labours were done merely for hope of reward. No! a Christian feels constrained (the word of the Apostle) that is as it were, forcibly compelled "to work while it is day, knowing that the night cometh, when no man can work." Moreover, "true charity, that most excellent gift had been poured into her heart by God," and she could not be happy and useless; and so when she finished what was right and needful for herself she turned her hand to do what good she was able

for her poor neighbour. Perhaps some one may be surprised that she should think this necessary; but let it be remembered, this woman learned her religion from the Bible. There she would read, PROV. xiv, 23. “In all labour there is profit; but the *talk of the lips tendeth only to penury:*” and xxviii, 19. “He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread, but he that *followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.*” She obeyed these words in their plain meaning. She did not spend her time in talking and keeping company with, and running after idle, foolish, gossiping people; and what time she saved in this manner, she spent in useful employment. But, if again it should appear to any one, too much to require one very poor person to work for another, after she had hardly earned her own bread; again we go to the Scriptures, and there we read this precept, given to every one “who had learned Christ, and been renewed in the spirit of his mind :” “Let him labour working with his hands the things that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” EPH. iv, 28. It is thus we find there is no morality like that which

comes from the word of God; and all who do learn their religion there, become "*not slothful in business but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*" ROM. XII, 11.

There are other virtues also, which are generally found as the companions of industry, namely—*order, cleanliness, and economy*: these four are the happy guests which true religion brings into the houses of the poor. What dirt and confusion and waste we see in some cottages! every right minded person would wish to correct such evils. Now how shall we do this most effectually? Certainly by putting the minds and the hearts of the inhabitants into a proper and orderly state. Religion *can* do this. An ungodly man's feelings, thoughts, and actions, are all wrong and out of course: one day he may seem to do better than another day; but it is all uncertain—you never know how or where you may find him. Different passions are striving for the mastery within—now one, now another prevails, and when he can and dares, he will indulge himself. He cannot always be idle or he

would starve; and many other bad things he fears to do for his credit's sake, but there is no sure, safe principle in him, on which you can rely, until he becomes religious.

When the good woman, whose case we are now considering was a servant, she often used to see her fellow-servants wasting, and even throwing away pieces of fish, or any thing else not very dear: she could not bear it, and she often said to them, the time would come, when *they who wasted would want what they wasted*. And the reason why she was now not forced to go to the parish for relief, but could live in a state of honest independence, was, that she had *always been economical*. And where did she learn this? Why does not the wisdom of God tell any of us, who will read it, "He that is *slothful* in his work, is brother to him that is a *great waster*." PROV. xviii, 9. Idleness and waste constantly go together, when poor people will not follow the advice of their best friend.

Let us also think again of that striking

example of our Lord himself. Once when a great multitude, as many as five thousand persons were collected round Jesus Christ, listening to His preaching, having been a long time with Him, they became very weary and hungry: our merciful and gracious Saviour asked what there was for them to eat, and He was told only five Loaves and two Fishes. Jesus said, "make them sit down" and then He blessed the food and ordered it to be given to every one of them; and while His disciples were handing it about, it multiplied so, that these few loaves and fishes quite satisfied all the five thousand persons. When all was over our Lord said seriously to His disciples "gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." JOHN, vi, 12. They did so, and filled twelve baskets with pieces, which might serve for the dinner of many a poor hungry creature.

Now why did our kind Saviour think so much about this broken meat? We see that He increased the food by His own power, when and as He pleased: of course He could again supply as many as He liked, without these fragments of

bread and fish. So He could also bring to us every day, all that we want, without any exertion of our own. "He openeth His hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness." PSAL, cvlv, 15. And if He thought proper, we might receive out of his fulness" directly, and that without sowing, ploughing, reaping, or any labour. It would be *as easy* to God, if it was *as good* for us. But our Creator and Redeemer has considered what we are, and what is really for our benefit, when He requires us to work that we may have food and clothing, and lodging. Regular employment is necessary, if it were merely to keep people out of the way of evil. As it is, with themselves and families to provide for, many men and women also, often seem to have too much time upon their hands; and so often they are seen standing at their doors, or lounging about at the street corner; and it would be well if this was all. But the fact is, that "Satan finds some mischief still, for idle hands to do."

It is very seldom after a fair or an holiday, that there is not more wickedness to repent of, and

more sad effects of intemperance to lament over than there was the day before: now this plainly proves, that when people have nothing to do but please themselves, they become their own worst enemies. If every person was truly pious and virtuous, there would be less danger in leaving them to spend all their time as they liked. But, since Scripture and experience both shew, that *there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not,*" Ecc. vii, 20, and since very many are openly immoral and profligate therefore the best thing that could happen to them, is to be bound down to some regular work, and so kept out of harm's way. There are many poor starving wives and ragged children, that have reason to thank God when their husband and father is employed, and who dread above all things, the pay-day and the idleness that often follows it. By carrying on steady business, which he cannot well leave, a man's mind is kept engaged and is therefore less exposed to temptation. He is also taught to restrain his own inclinations, and to acquire a habit of patience and diligence and submission. All this is very useful for him both as a neighbour, subject, and servant of God.

Whereas, if all the idle people in the world could live without labour, they certainly would not live long ; they would first ruin their own tempers and health, and then beggar their children and wives, and then fight, and it would be well if they did not kill their companions. It is difficult enough, even now, when so many are busily employed every day, and thus forced as it were, out of the way of temptation and harm, to preserve even outward order and decency. But if instead of this, all mankind were let loose upon the earth, tearing and drinking, and swearing and gaming, as we see sometimes once a year, when a feast-day comes round, this world would be past living in.

The well-disposed and evil-disposed too, have reason every day to bless God, that He has made it a law for man, which no power can alter; “In the sweat of thy face, shalt thou eat bread.” GEN. iii, 19, This our merciful Redeemer knows is for our benefit; therefore He first ordered it, and always has continued it to this day: and in like manner He would teach us for our own good, to

be frugal, careful, and economical. When, therefore Christ ordered the fragments to be gathered, He meant to leave us this lesson ; *that no person, not even the most powerful and the richest, is ever to waste any thing. It is very wrong in all, and particularly foolish in the poor to do so: and most wicked in servants to squander their master's property in this manner.* The Scriptures positively command servants to do their duty, “not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of God, doing the will of God from the heart.” EP. vi, 6.

What then is that “one thing needful,” to bring comfort and happiness into all families ? We cannot hesitate to say true, simple, and practical religion ; as any one would have confessed had they seen the clean, tidy, careful conduct of this good christian. It is delightful to go into a small lowly cottage, and see the clean floor, the bright furniture, all the plates in order; the mug full of flowers, on a little table on the dresser; perhaps some pots of plants in the window; the children, not rolling in the sand, but doing some

little useful turn, and the mother seated at her neat work. It does one's heart good, to see how equally comfort is divided, and that God can give peace of mind and real happiness to any who truly love and serve him. In this respect "the rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all." PROV. xxii, 2.

CHAPTER IV.

DISINTERESTEDNESS—ABSENCE OF SELFISHNESS.

Another striking feature in the character we are now considering, was *disinterestedness*, or the *absence of selfishness*. The Apostle gives this advice, “Be not wise in your own conceit.” Rom. xii, 16. And let nothing be done through strife or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves.” Ph. ii, 3. Oh! how much unhappiness would be put an end to, in many a street and village, and family, if these simple Scriptures were fully obeyed. Many persons in the circumstances of this poor widow, seem never tired of thinking and talking about themselves, and every thing they can possibly get, they seem to feel so much clear gain:

hen, if a neighbour has received any little benefit, they are angry because they are passed over, while they almost seem to imagine, that, what is given to another is lost to themselves. How very different to this common conduct were the feelings and actions of this good woman; she was not "wise in her own conceit," for, as we have seen above, she would scarcely allow herself to be a christian at all; and so sensible was she of her own ignorance, that she scarcely dared to speak her opinions. She was not always thinking what others would say of her, or how she might as it were, get beyond them; she had no little ambition, no "vain glory," and therefore no "strife or envyings." But really, she seemed to imagine almost any one more worthy than herself; and so it came to pass, that she thought and felt more for her poor neighbours, than she did even for her own comfort and benefit. This was plainly seen on many occasions, and especially when the kind lady who discovered how very poor she was, and how much she needed certain little comforts in her old age, offered to put her name on a charitable list, by which she would have received

some broth, and some articles of clothing. This she respectfully and firmly declined, and by what she said, it was plain that she had got those words of God into her heart, "Let no man seek *his own*, but every man *another's good*." 1 CORINTH. x, 24. "*Charity seeketh not her own.*" xiii, 5.

As for receiving any relief from the parish, *she* considered it would have been a *sin little short of robbery*. Though if poor people generally, had the same right principles, as well as the same careful industrious conduct, she had; no doubt the poor rates would be less than half what they have been. How very foolish and ignorant are the owners of land and farmers, and other persons of property, when they shew themselves indifferent to the religious education, and instruction of the poor; why, if they knew their own interest, they would understand, *that the shortest way to save their pockets is to get those they employ, and must support to be true christians*. What short-sighted narrow-minded beings are men without religion: they think they are acting for

heir own benefit, when often they are preparing the greatest evil for themselves, and those who come after them.

Now the pious woman whose character is before us, not only followed that precept, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others; PHIL. ii, 4, but he went much further. For since she was too poor to do any thing for others, *without depriving herself*, she did not hesitate; as a christian she knew what her Lord had said to her, "If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." LUKE, x, 23. This scripture like others, she took in its plain meaning, and she followed it in this manner. She gradually stinted herself in bread, and her other simple food, until she found the smallest quantity she could live upon, and it seemed too certain that she allowed herself less than was needful for her health and age. When the kind lady spoke to her once, about a little piece of meat as likely to do her good, she was forced unwillingly to confess that she sel-

dom permitted herself such an indulgence except may be once a fortnight, when her weakness seemed positively to require it.

Oh! if this little book should ever meet the eye of one whom God has blessed with abundance, and who, "clothed in purple and fine linen, fares sumptuously every day," let the sacrifice which this humble woman made, be seriously considered. The thing itself may appear trifling, but "she did what she could." Is there not more moral dignity and elevation of character exhibited in such an act of self denial, than in many a vaunted deed of warrior or patriot which the pages of history record, and succeeding generations admire? And if it be enquired whence such disinterested and enlarged charity could arise? There is but one reply. The religion of the son of God had possession of her heart; and the love of Christ constrained this poor woman to do the very little which she could for the glory of Him "who had loved her and given Himself for her." Indeed! if we do admire benevolent affections and charitable conduct, that

we may attain even these, we should go learn of Him who in His word exhorts; “Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”
COL. iii, 12, 14.

The writer of these lines was once travelling with a certain eminent person, who was going to London, to take office with the present Government. The Mail, which travelled with great rapidity, stopped once for dinner; the gentleman alluded to, though evidently very hungry, after snatching one morsel of food, received from his servant a Newspaper, which he continued to read, quite abstracted from all other things, until he was summoned to continue his journey. And as the writer resumed his place opposite to this striking example of the engrossing power of earthly pursuits, he remembered the expression of Job.

"I have esteemed thy words (Oh! God,) more than my necessary food." **JOB** xxiii, 12. Now though he knew "that the children of this world, are in their generation, wiser than the children of light," yet he indulged a faint hope, that some day, he might find similar devotion, in a true christian. On first hearing the little fact just related, he was rejoiced to have proved, that religion is sometimes as powerful as worldliness. Yes, it is true, that there was once a poor widow, who did so highly esteem the word of God, that in order to send the Bible, and the teachers of it, to those who have not this blessing, she cheerfully deprived herself of her necessary food. There lived one thousand eight hundred years ago, a poor widow, who gave to the service of God, "two mites, which make a farthing;" and the kind commendation of our Lord is read at this day: **MARY** xii, 41. There was another humble woman who gave to her Saviour all she could, a box of very precious ointment, which in faith she had kept and poured on Him for his burial; and according to the promise of Christ, "wheresoever this gospel is preached, in all the

world, there also this, which that woman did, is told for a memorial of her." MAT. xxvi, 13. And so we may hope that on the day which is fast approaching, the simple act recorded in this book, when it has perhaps been forgotten on earth, will be remembered by Him who has graciously declared, "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, in my name because ye belong to Christ, verily I say to you, he shall not lose his reward." MARK, ix, 41.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTIAN DISPOSITIONS—PEACEABLE ACTIVITY— CONTENTMENT—THANKFULNESS.

The simple description which the Apostle gives of the life of our blessed Saviour, is this: “He went about doing good;” and thus we find that all His true disciples, in every age and country, endeavour, according to their ability, to follow his gracious example. Those who are raised above the fear of want, and abundantly provided for, may generally, without much difficulty, thus imitate their Lord. But when the poor attempt to do good to their fellow creatures, it requires self-denial, frugality, patience, and strong principle to carry them through their difficult work.

When, therefore, we see any lowly follower of Christ thus treading in His steps, we should rejoice in the evidence thus given to the power of true religion. Yet, at the same time, it should be remembered, that it is less difficult to perform *charitable actions*, than to acquire *charitable dispositions*:—it is far easier to *to do good*, than *to be good*.

In these days particularly, there is oftentimes reason to fear, lest a bustling noisy activity, should silence the still small voice of conscience, and render distasteful the examination of the heart. *It is quite possible to talk and be employed much about religious things and yet not be religious.* And here again as usual the Holy Scriptures lead us directly to the truth:—“Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,” says the Apostle, “and give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. 1 COR. xiii, 3. Great benefits may be conferred upon others, and immense sacrifices may be made, yet, if the motives be not pure, and if Christian principle do not direct the practice, the mere action itself is

little worth. It is then very important, that we should examine closely the state of our hearts, our tempers, our habits, and inclinations, as well as our outward conduct. We can easily see what *we do*, but our thoughts and feelings are out of sight, and they may continue very wrong, almost without our knowing it, unless we look closely into them. As however, they are the springs that move our conduct, and yet are so often overlooked, we should be the more careful and diligent in examining what is thus hidden in our hearts. St. Paul in his epistle to the GALATIANS, v, 22, has mentioned the chief features of the christian character—Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith (or fidelity. TITUS, ii, 10) meekness, temperance, (or moderation in all things.) What a list of calm, quiet, patient virtues is here! No noise, no bustle, no display. It is possible, even a serious person may be surprised, that these nine dispositions or states of the heart and conduct, have been chosen above all others, and entered in the Bible; yet, if the question were put to the Apostle himself, he might perhaps reply, that it is almost more

necessary to be taught what *we must bear*, than what *we must do*; since it is often more difficult to suffer than to act aright.

St. Paul, as an enlightened and experienced man knew that any religion, which was really to benefit such beings as we are, must produce in us precisely those affections, and that conduct here described. And as this state of mind is not natural, but in many respects quite contrary to what we most like and practice, it was the more necessary plainly to describe it. Also since the virtues here mentioned are not apt to command much attention, or even when observed to attain much praise in a busy careless world, it was the more requisite that Christians should be able to read what kind of character is really pleasing to God. And thus the Holy Spirit brought these truths to the Apostle's mind, and also ordered him to write down, that these heavenly dispositions are His own divine work. Wherever they really exist, the same Almighty power which at first moved on the creation, and called darkness out of light, and order out of confusion, has been

present and active. We therefore humbly hope that the good woman whose history we are now considering, had experienced this gracious influence; for it was observed by those who knew her, not only that she was delighted to do all the good within her power, but also, that *her heart was filled with love or charity*. She was disposed to feel kindly to all mankind; she never pronounced a severe judgement, even on those who seemed most to deserve it: her feelings were not blunted either by her own poverty, or the poor return which she received for the favors she did to others.

Some of the clothes she undertook freely to mend for the ragged children, were so dirty, she could not bear to handle them; she mildly sent them back, and merely requested they might be cleaned a little, and then she would continue her work. Character is tried by little things.—Many a commander of armies has not been able to govern his own spirit. (PROV. xvi, 32.) And perhaps there is scarcely any proof of real piety so satisfactory, as a “patient continuance in well

g.” (Rom. ii, 7.) in small matters. There is one at hand to look on and admire—there is nothing great or noble about it—no place for any other false principle to work. Therefore, what has been mentioned may seem to us, an acute observer of conduct and motives, to perceive that feature of christian charity, taught by the Apostle, “not easily provoked, suffering long and kind.” Here again we cannot perceive the depth of knowledge and wisdom of Holy Scripture. And if we continue the same course (1 Cor. xiii, 4.) we read, that christian charity or heart-felt charity “envieth not; vaunteth itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave unseemly; seeketh not her own; thinketh no rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in truth; beareth all things; hopeth all things.” What a delightful character is here described! It had all desired and prayed for, and obtained “excellent gift of charity,” what a change could be produced in every house, and throughout the whole family of man. But, alas! it is here and there we find a person thus truly edified: and when we do discover such a case,

it is considered remarkable; and secretly, by scarcely believed.

Yet, let us remember that our gracious S^a invites us all to put on this very character, promises to form it within us, by His own Spirit. If, then, we can trace any of these fea in one of His disciples, we should rejoice t serve them closely; for they prove His pow still with us, and they may teach us not only we ought to be, but what we might be. Surely this good woman's heart, (to use Apostle's own form of words,) "was cast i mould of this scripture." Yet we must be ca to give the praise where it is due. St. Pau claims, "by the grace of God I am what I and His grace which was bestowed upon me, not in vain; but I labour more abundantly they all; yet, not I, but the grace of God v was in me." 1 COR. xv, 10. These are feelings of a christian, who "knows that in self, that is in his flesh, dwelleth no good th and therefore is very careful, "that he who ; eth, should glory in the Lord."

There still remain other interesting features of character, which ought not to be passed over without notice. The next which should be mentioned may properly be termed her *peaceable activity*. It is very rarely indeed that the christian tempers and virtues are so happily blended, that the same person is quiet, retired, and unobtrusive, as well as zealous and vigorous in doing good. Yet this is precisely "the conversation which becometh the gospel of Christ." And it might surprise some persons, not well acquainted with the Bible, to meet with so many precepts and warnings as are there written, in order to make people *at once diligent and also quiet*. For instance, St. Paul writes to Titus, iii, 8, 9, 14. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men; but avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain. And let our (Disciples) also learn to practise honest trades, for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful," (but able to

assist others.) What good sound sense, (if we may so speak) is there in these verses! The inspired teacher here directs that professing christians be exhorted to prove their religion, by their diligence in doing good: that they are to avoid all useless arguments and discussions about deep doctrine, which probably they may not understand; and lest want of employment should lead them, as it often does, to be busy about vain things, he advises them all to be engaged in doing something useful, both for their own benefit, and for the good of others.

True religion, as it is learned from the Bible, does not encourage high flown feelings, nor raise its disciples, as it were, to walk over the heads of their neighbours; but it brings them down to do all their duties, "not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will, doing service as to the Lord, and not to men." EP. vi, 6, 7. Thus in the 1 THES. iv, 11. "We beseech you brethren, that *ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business,* and to work with your

own hands, as we command you, that ye may walk honestly towards them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing." Again—
2 THES. iii, 10. "Even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat: for we hear there are some which *walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies.* Now them that are such, we command and exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that *with quietness they work,* and eat their own bread. But ye Brethren be not weary in well doing."

Lastly—While the Apostle St. Paul speaks in a very severe manner, of the sinfulness of women "who learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and *not only idle but tattlers also, and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not.*" 1 TIM. v, 13. St. Peter advises them "to adorn themselves with the *ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,*" which he adds, "*is in the sight of God, of great price.*" 1 PETER, iii, 4. What sound lessons of practical wisdom may be learned in the word of God!

Every duty occupies its proper place, nothing carried to extremes, all is plain practical piety, as well as heartfelt and fervent piety and Charity.

Sometimes sincere and well meaning people get a little knowledge of what they think religion requires of them, and they go about and fall into many mistakes, and then their Religion is blamed. But the truth is, that such persons do not sin from being "righteous over much," but from being not righteous enough: they have been imperfectly taught: or with many good intentions they may have also many remaining faults to be corrected, and sin to be subdued; and thus the doctrines and precepts of the Lord, which they intend to follow, are prevented from producing their proper effect. It is however, very delightful when we meet with a well-taught judicious Christian, who is leading a quiet, retired, peaceable life, and yet is kind and active in doing good "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit serving the Lord." Such we must consider the good woman to have been.

She had also been allowed to obtain another very useful and desirable disposition, which may next be noticed, namely—*Contentment*. The diligent student of Holy Scripture, will often find much meaning and instruction, even in single words, which may perhaps, not be generally observed. Thus St. Paul (PHIL. iv, 11.) writes—I have learned in *whatsoever* state I am, therewith to be content. The Apostle knew that he was not naturally inclined to yield to the wise arrangements of God; that he, like other men, was prone to think and act for himself, without considering what the will of his maker, or the good of his fellow creatures might require. He felt how disposed his heart was to rise up in rebellion against the government of the Almighty: and if any thing happened very disagreeable, uncomfortable, or even unexpected, how difficult it was, patiently to bear it. He, like other persons, wished to have every thing his own way, and when any thing happened that did not please him, he perhaps did not stay to consider how necessary it might be, but only felt it was unpleasant. But as soon as he became a sincere disciple of Christ

he began to learn a very useful lesson, which is indeed not easily, nor quickly, nor commonly acquired. *He learned in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content.* It is a very great favor when the Lord condescends thus to teach any of his disciples: yet, if *we* will but attend to his advice, *we* also may become contented and happy as St. Paul was. But then it must be in the very same way. You sometimes meet with people, who, because they have strong nerves, or little feeling, or hearts hardened by the world, *seem* to be contented. Sooner or later, something is sure to happen, which will shew that this indifference or hardness, is very inferior to that calm and submissive state of mind, produced by true religion. Let us observe closely, how the experienced christian, and inspired Apostle feels and exhorts upon this subject. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for *He hath said I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*" HEB. xiii, 5. It is a comfortable reliance upon the promises and care of God, which alone can prevent undue anxiety, and keep the mind

calm and peaceful, under all circumstances. Again, 1 TIM. vi, 6. *Godliness with contentment is great gain*; for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out: and having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." The *Lord is at hand, be careful for nothing*; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving; let your requests be made *known unto God; and the peace of God*, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ." PHIL. iv, 6, 7. How very kindly do the words of our Lord advise, persuade, and encourage us for our true happiness! How anxious our Heavenly Father seems to be, that we should trust Him and be blessed! Yet alas! when we turn to the real state of mankind, when we look into the families of our towns or villages, or wolds, or moors, what ill-humour and quarrels, and harsh words, and sour tempers do we find and lament over! Some poor people seem to have a sort of pleasure in finding fault with every thing; and one would suppose, they were trying to shew how independent they are, by grumbling

as often as they possibly can. When people are in this state of mind, even the blessings which they really enjoy, they neither feel nor care for; while every little evil, instead of being quietly passed over, and patiently suffered, is magnified until it seems twenty times as big as it really is. *There is far more unhappiness in the world, arising from that discontented spirit, which makes people see things in a perverse manner, than from all the actual evils which they meet with, in their way from the cradle to the grave.* How then shall this plague be stayed? Let true religion enter and rule the house, and what a change shall we behold! As the voice of the Lord upon the swelling waters said, "peace be still," so in many a disturbed and troubled family, there would be "a great calm."

We have seen how little this good woman possessed. It was not because she was handsomely provided for and had every thing to her own mind, that therefore she was contented. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of

the things which he possesseth." As oftentimes the possessors of wealth are deprived of health or children, or many other real comforts, so the poor are often allowed to enjoy the very blessings which the rich would give all their property to purchase. Frequently true happiness deserts the sumptuous mansion, to dwell in the lowly cottage, proving that "*the life, the real good of man,* does not consist merely in his wealth. Indeed "*the mind is its own place;*" and every one has, to a certain extent, events in his own power. *True contentment does not consist so much in bringing our circumstances to our mind, as in bringing our mind to our circumstances.* In a world like this, where many things are constantly happening, which we neither expect, nor can at all control, there is scarcely any disposition so useful as that we are now commanding. It comes into exercise every day, and casts its own colouring over the whole tenor of our life. It produces in us just that state of feeling which enables us to perform our daily duties with calmness and comfort; and it gives a spirit and activity which carries us well through any occupation;

especially it preserves that frame of mind, which is suitable to the service of God and the enjoyment of devotion. *It seems almost impossible for a very discontented person to be able heartily to join in any act of divine worship.*

Consider how the Apostle exhorts christians, 1 THES. v, 16. "*Rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing; in every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God, in Christ Jesus, concerning you.*" It is indeed quite plain from this and similar scriptures, that true piety is attended not merely with contentment, but with *heartfelt thankfulness*. When St. Paul, in his different letters, is pointing out the chief features of a Christian's character, and is giving advice about the tempers and the conduct of religious persons, he constantly refers to this state of mind. "*As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*" COL. ii, 6, 7. Again—"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with *thanksgiving.*" iv, 2. And

"let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; *and be ye thankful.*" iii, 15. A part of the dreadful description given of very wicked men, (ROM. i, 21,) is this—"When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, *neither were thankful.*" While the privilege of christians is thus largely expressed. "*Giving thanks always, for all things* unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." EPH. v, 20. A contented and grateful spirit is therefore a very pleasing and most satisfactory evidence of true religion; especially when, as in the case of this pious woman, it flourishes in the midst of lowliness and poverty, opening its beautiful flowers, not to the sunshine of the world, but to the smile and the blessing of God.

CHAPTER VI.

PROPRIETY OF CONDUCT.

One of the very comfortable truths plainly repeated in the Bible, and known by experience to the diligent and faithful, is thus expressed. "*God giveth to a man, that is good in His sight, wisdom and knowledge.*" Eccl. ii, 26. "He layeth up *sound wisdom* for the *righteous.*" Prov. ii, 7. They that *seek the Lord understand all things.* xxviii, 5. The writer of these pages has observed almost with astonishment, the literal fulfilment of these and similar Scriptures. Yet, why should we be surprised at any good effects which arise from religion? Is it not the great gift of God to man? Is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and all its full provision intended exactly to meet the wants of our fallen race? We ought therefore, to expect very great

things indeed, whenever a child of man is led and taught by the spirit of God. "Oh thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt," is a reproof which applies to many of us, as well as the sinking Peter. And it is worthy of notice, that when our Lord seemed, as it were, restricted in His power, "when He could do no mighty work," it was because of the unbelief of the people. MARK, vi, 6. Our language and feeling should rather be, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also, freely give *us all things?*" ROM. viii, 32. Certainly we may reasonably believe, that when any one is brought under the influence of true religion, the whole course of his being will be more or less affected by it. Now it is most interesting to observe, that in addition to that temper and conduct mentioned above, there were found in the christian woman, about whom we are writing, other pleasing proofs of what the Lord can do for "the people who serve Him." Particularly any one who conversed with her, could not fail to be struck with the *correctness and soundness of her judgment.* This was

discovered generally in the opinions she expressed on different subjects, and in the manner in which she portioned out her employment, and performed her various duties. But as an example we may take her management and disposal of her little property. As a very poor person, she would be likely to attach as much importance to her shillings, as many richer persons would to several hundred pounds; and yet there was a liberality and prudence combined, which shewed at once the most enlarged and sober mind. It was stated above, that she had saved a certain sum, during the time of her service: the principal of this, without any suggestion from another, she expressed her intention of leaving to her eldest son and his family. But she had also gathered together, by rigid economy, five pounds, with which she designed to buy some carpenter's tools for her younger son, just beginning histrade: before, however, the purchase was made, by a sudden illness he was removed from this world. "As it has pleased God," she said "to take my poor child away, and he no longer needs my little help, I shall give what I have gathered to the Lord."

And accordingly she proceeded, as related above, to present a portion of this sum for the purpose of sending the Gospel to the Heathen, and the rest of it she disposed of in a similar manner. It was moreover discovered, as before alluded to, that she was in the habit of denying herself food and clothing, and this expressly, that she might have always something to give for pious and charitable uses. For as she said, though she considered it right to leave her son the principle of her little property, yet, if she could by denying herself, save any thing weekly, she thought she might be allowed to give this in the manner she most desired, namely; for the benefit of her poor ignorant fellow creatures, and the advancement of the cause of God in the world.

This little point may seem to some too trifling to deserve so much notice, but those who are accustomed accurately to examine human character, are aware that *exact propriety of conduct* is one of the rarest of all its features. It is the observation of an eminent naturalist, that though he had watched certain birds with close attention, and for

many years, he never saw any of them do any thing which, had he been a bird, he would not have done himself. In other words, these little creatures always acted in the very manner they ought to do, according to their circumstances and nature. Alas! it is not so with man. Their maker Himself thus complains. "The ox know-eth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Is. i, 3. The truth is, that the mind as well as the heart of the human race is disordered and depraved, and there is but one power which can restore all functions to their proper office. And we ought to be sure, that if the truth of God be revealed as the great instrument of our improvement, that it will, where it takes effect, influence the whole character. Thus it often comes to pass, that persons, who without religion would be contemptible and useless, become by it both respectable and useful. And in particular, when the heart is really under the direction of divine grace, and the fruits of the spirit (GAL. v, 22, 23,) abound and flourish; even the outward manners, and the very expression of the counte-

nance partake of the same blessed influence. In that complete description of practical charity, as shewn in the temper and conduct, given in the first epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, c. xiii, in the 5th verse, we may perceive one remarkable feature, thus expressed—The christian *does not behave himself unseemly* ;” that is, feels and acts in a becoming manner. Certainly, if any holy Scripture needed to be confirmed by experience, the writer could prove the exactness of this statement, by his own observation. The same divine power, which instead of selfishness, vanity, and envy, produces, patience, kindness, and good feeling, (see v, 4.) can also create in the renewed mind, the capacity to speak and act in a proper manner, under the various circumstances which may arise. Indeed it is expressly written; *The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.*” PROV. xvi, 1. and still more positively; “the lips of the righteous *know what is acceptable.*” PROV. x, 32. Rough manners are softened, and harsh vulgar expressions are taken away, when better thoughts and higher principles enter and rule the heart.

Besides true religion subdues that proud spirit independence, *which was the essence of the first sin*, and is still the prevailing fault of fallen man; and then those whom divine providence has placed in superior stations, become considerably condescending, and kind; and those who occupy inferior stations, are made submissive, grateful and respectful. "Godliness" is thus proved to be "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" 1 TIM. iv, 8. Not only do the scriptures of God prepare us for another and better world, as to render "us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of Heaven; but they also teach us how to perform our several duties, and how to behave in the different situations to which we are called on earth.

A Christian is the best patriot, father, child, husband, master, servant, subject, and friend in the world; and the Bible, so far from encouraging any thing like rudeness and incivility, in many places, both by precept and example, requires us in the words of St. Peter, to be "courteous." 1 PETER, iii,

Our blessed Lord himself in his instructions, has not overlooked the duty of politeness, but in LUKE, xiv, 8. has taught us how to behave in regard to the difference of rank, which exists among men. Indeed he requires us to be civil and attentive even to those who may be disagreeable, and would be our enemies. MAT. v, 47. While if any one will read with prayer, what the wisdom of God has recorded of the behaviour of those very good men, Abraham and Jacob, (GEN. xxiii and xxxiii,) he will not fail to observe the natural union between piety and politeness.

There is in the third chapter of Isaiah, a description of a country in the very worst state; and among other deplorable things it is added, (iii, 5.) that "young people shall behave proudly to those older than themselves, and people of inferior rank shall behave insolently to those above them." The Apostle also led us to expect certain "*perilous times*," when many persons should shew the following detestable character: "They shall be lovers of their own selves, cove-

tous, boasters, proud, disobedient to parents, unthankful, without natural affection, heady, high-minded:—speaking evil of those things which they know not, murmurers, complainers, despising dominion, and speaking evil of dignities. 2 TIMOTHY iii, 2. JUDE, 16, &c. Now lest any one who calls himself a christian, should fall into this snare of the Devil, not only does the spirit of the Gospel lead us quite the other way, but God who knoweth our infirmities, has written down for us, many plain precepts, which teach us how to behave. Thus,

EXOD. xx, 12, & EPH. vi, 1, 2. “Children obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honor thy father and mother which is the first commandment, with promise.”

LEV. xix, 32. “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God.”

ROM. xiii, 1. “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power

but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God; whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation.”

PROV. xxiv, 21. “My son, Fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change.”

1 PETER, ii, 18, EPH. vi, 5. “Servants be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the foward; with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.”

EPH. v, 22, 1 PET. iii, 5. “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For after this manner in the old time, the holy women who trusted in God, adorned themselves (with a meek and quiet spirit) being in subjection to their own husbands; even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord.”

HEB. xiii, 17. “Obey them that have the

rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you."

ROMANS. xiii, 7. 1 PETER, ii, 13. "Render therefore to all their dues, fear to whom fear, and honor to whom honor is due. And submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."

In this manner God acknowledges the various authorities, and approves of the difference of rank which exists among men; and He directs how children are to behave to their parents, the young to the aged, servants to masters, wives to husbands, subjects to their rulers, and the people to their clergy. And we may observe that it is not merely to the good men who may fill these superior offices, that the inferiors are required to shew respect and obedience. On the contrary we are required to be subject, not only *on account of the character of the individual*, "*but for conscience sake*," and to submit *to the ordinance*

itself for the Lord's sake. If, indeed, the elders of the Church, for instance, *rule well*, they are to be counted *worthy of double honor*. If masters are *faithful*, their servants are *on that account*, to serve them with *more diligence and fidelity*. 1 TIM. v, 17—vi, 2. But should any person who has been called to a situation of authority, be unhappily ignorant or negligent of his duty, we are not thereby freed from our obligation. Who is to judge when and where obedience ceases to be binding? It is not at all difficult to perceive that the very persons who most need to be kept in subjection, would be the first to find fault with those who are placed over them. We see this alas! in many an ill behaved child, in many rebellious subjects, and in many a rude and insolent character, which is too common in the present day. God who gives us laws on purpose to bind us down to walk in the right way, has not therefore allowed any one to say, *when he may follow and when he may break* the commandment to obey, but he simply says—
“*The powers that be, are my ordinance: who-*

soever resisteth, resisteth my ordinance: therefore submit."

It may possibly happen; that a christian shall be laid under *the painful necessity* of refusing the orders of rightful authority, and may be obliged "to obey God rather than man: (Acts, v, 29.) that is when any law or commandment of man, *is plainly contrary to the will of God*. These cases are rare; and it may be observed, that the acts of disobedience which most need to be repressed, and are too frequent, have nothing to do with such pure and religious principles. St. Paul as an inspired man, having a deep insight into human character, has not omitted to notice and decide this matter completely. 1 TIM. ii, 1. "I exhort that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; *for kings, and for all that are in authority*; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." He does not teach us to pray only for

pious princes, such as Edward VI, King of England; *but generally for those who are in authority*, even such a very wicked man as the Emperor who ruled at that time the Epistle was written: and he also plainly implies that a private christian should be satisfied *to pass on quietly, through life*; and as “he seeks a better country, that is an heavenly,” he should be respectful and thankful for earthly authority, if he is only allowed peaceably to do his duty and serve his Maker. Whatever “heady highminded” men may think of such feeling and conduct, “in the sight of God our Saviour, it is good and acceptable.”

Then again, the Apostle, knowing how prone men are to be proud and disobedient, considered it necessary, as a sort of general example, to order servants to count their masters, whatever they might be, *worthy of all honor*; and he proceeds to say, that if both master and servants should be true christians, that this community of faith did not take away the difference of station. Upon this point he speaks strongly, and seems most anxious to guard christians from an evil,

which he knew according to the pride of heart, would be very common. He is the very particular and positive, and he *commands respectful obedience under all circumstances as a duty required of the disciples of Christ*. He seemed to foresee that religion might be an excuse for “speaking evil of dignities disregarding lawful authority; and therefore gives a very solemn charge to Timothy as a Christian teacher: “These things teach and exhort (be firm, do not care what people say or but go on,) and “if any man teach otherwise consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *to the devils which are according to godlessness*, he is knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputations of corrupt minds, and destitute of the supposing that gain is godliness; *from such draw thyself.*” 1 TIM. vi, 3—5.

Now let us remember that the texts just cited are part of that “scripture given by inspiration.”

of God, and profitable for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 TIMOTHY iii, 16. In the first chapter of the first Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy it is written, "this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." This verse is considered, with good reason, by all wise persons, as very precious, and it is often quoted; but in the second and sixth chapters there are the passages which have just been considered; part of the same portion of Scripture given by the same inspiration, and having the same divine authority as the word of God. It is to be feared that there are those who profess to believe the doctrine contained in the one scripture, while they neglect the duty contained in the other scripture. It would be well if those who preach and teach the word of God, in reference to such matters, remembered that wise precept; "these ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone." MAT. xxiii, 22. It is as necessary to be instructed *what we are to do*, as what we

are to believe. Moreover, if we look closely into the above and similar passages, we shall find that the most precious doctrines of the Gospel are so mixed up with the plain and practical duties derived from them, that they cannot and ought not to be separated: they are like root and branches, hands and feet and head.

The Apostle knew that ill-taught or inexperienced persons, even with good intentions, might run away with very false notions of what they would think and call the doctrines of grace; and in the words of St Jude, turn “the grace of God into lasciviousness.” And therefore in the second and third chapters of his epistle to Titus, while he states those doctrines in the strongest words, he adds; “put them in mind to be subject, to speak evil of no man, but to be gentle; and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” And then as if there was danger of such truths being neglected, he thus very solemnly concludes; *This is a faithful saying, and these things, I will that thou affirm constantly, that*

they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works.” iii, 8.

One of the best and easiest proofs that can be given by any one, that he is a believer in God, is “the doing his duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call him.” This is an evidence which all understand, and it occurs constantly. It is not necessary to have any time set apart for it—it is not necessary that any other duties should be interrupted for it—it is a testimony which is offered all day long, in every circumstance in which we are placed. Whereas nothing does so much harm, both to the character of the person professing religion, and to the cause of the religion he professes, as when there is any reason to think that he is thereby made to forget his station, and rendered disrespectful and self-sufficient. It would be very useful, for all persons, especially the young, who may think they know more perhaps than others about the truths of God, often to put this question to themselves: “Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou, that thou didst not receive?”

1 COR. iv, 7. This would produce lowliness and patience, and would create a desire to do good indeed, but always in a meek and humble manner. And if it should so happen, for instance, that the child is pious and the parent ungodly, or the servant serious and the master irreligious, it should be considered, that these are the very occasions on which true piety is tried and proved. St. Peter says plainly, that servants are to be subject to their masters, (and he means all inferiors to those who are placed over them,) "with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward;" (that is illnatured and severe,) "for this is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience sake toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God: for even hereunto were ye called."

1 PET. ii, 18—20.

This Scripture applies not only to the class of persons mentioned, which was the strongest case

that could be, but *also to all who owe obedience to others.* And it contains a most useful lesson, especially to young people, in this country at this day, when such parts of religion are passed over, as if they were not found in the Bible at all. It is the privilege of Christians when placed in trying circumstances, to honor the Gospel they profess; and especially in such matters as now under consideration, “It is the will of God, that with well doing they may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” 1 PET. ii, 15. The world is too ready to find fault even with a “blameless and harmless” life; but if any one is so ignorant or wilful, as to use the privileges and liberty of religion as “a cloak of maliciousness,” whether in a private family, or in more public matters, such a person “denies the faith,” and, in some respects, is “worse than an infidel.”

The pious woman, whose character is here recorded, “did not behave herself unseemly,” but in all respects and towards all persons, she exhibited that propriety of conduct, which according to

the promise, she was taught through the won
grace of God. For the gospel of Christ rem-
the causes of illhumour and insolence, and b
in the haughty spirit of fallen man into su-
tion, produces in the temper and conduct,
pleasant features, as attention, respect, mild
patience, propriety, and all that is amiable
excellent.

CHAPTER VII.

CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

It is an important and interesting question, which we should seriously examine, and faithfully answer: can any one be really seeking his own salvation, and striving to walk “in the narrow way which leadeth unto life,” and at the same time be indifferent, or indeed not anxious about the souls of others? The very nature of christian charity seems to assist us in answering the question. It is love to man for Christ’s sake. St. John too says plainly, “He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen!” “Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from

him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? JOHN, iv, 20. iii, 17. *We cannot therefore pretend to be pious, unless we are also charitable. The doing good to our fellow creatures is one of the necessary evidences of religion: the heart.* But in what manner can we shew our real and warm concern for the good others? The word *Charity* is often misunderstood and used improperly, as if it meant on giving of alms: whereas St. Paul says, “We must give all our goods to feed the poor, and yet not have charity at all.” What then is true charity and how shall we most decidedly prove our heartfelt love for our fellow creatures? Supposing you were walking on the bank of a river, and you looked up and saw a man drowning, and a person running away with his clothes, you could not thought a very sensible or kind friend, if you were to leave the poor man to perish in the water and run away to catch the thief. Or if you do so, a wise man might well stop you with the words: “Is not the life more than raiment? In this case we see the truth very clearly: you need only use common sense, and we shall perceive

ceive how it applies. It is a very sorry proof of our love to God and man, if we are merely anxious to give food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and medicine to the sick, and there stop. These are necessary and delightful duties, and by no means to be spoken of lightly: in them we imitate the example, and obey the command of Christ. But then these *are not all, nor the most important offices of christian charity.*

We may remember the case of that faithful woman, who brought a box of very precious ointment, and according to the custom of the country, wishing to pay the greatest mark of respect to our Lord, she suddenly, before any one knew what she was doing, poured it all upon his head, "until the house was filled with the odour of it." The disciples seem to have considered this an unnecessary waste; especially Judas, that wicked traitor began to talk as if he was very charitable: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" "Now this he said," adds St. John, "not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and had

the bag, and bare that which was put there; that is, he hoped, if the price of this precious ointment had been put into the common purse with which he was entrusted, he might have the opportunity of stealing some or all of it, then have said he had given it to the poor. So something like this we occasionally meet with now when we ask for some help, to send the gospel to the miserable and perishing heathen. The answer which the kind persons who collect such contributions for this good purpose, occasion receive, is, "we have plenty of poor in our country: God knows there are heathens enough around us here: Charity begins at home."

that such people care, very often, for the poor at home, any more than Judas did, but they want an excuse for keeping their money in their pockets, and robbing God of His own property. Besides what they say is good for nothing; *they ought to do both*; as our Lord commands, "thou ought ye to have done and not leave the other undone." And if ever it is meant that those who are anxious for the souls of their neighbours, neglect the bodily wants of the poor

around them, this is not true, *the fact is quite otherwise*. Those who are most diligent and anxious for the spiritual welfare of mankind, are generally found attentive to their temporal necessities. Now in the passage before us, our Lord seems almost to have intended to help His faithful followers to an answer on all such occasions; for he replied very seriously, when there was mention made of the waste of the ointment: “Ye have the poor always with you; but Me ye have not always:” as though he had said; “you may be required to look to something more important than the bodily wants of the poor; *My glory is supreme, above all other considerations upon earth; and you should be prepared to promote My cause, and spread the knowledge of My truth, and advance the honor of My name as the first great duty which you are obliged to perform.*” And to confirm this decision in the most positive manner; he added, turning to the woman; “Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on Me—she hath done what she could—she is come beforehand to anoint My body to the burial.” This faithful

disciple, might not mean all her Saviour implied; but it is His manner “not to break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax.” He often takes the will for the deed, and where He knows the heart is with Him, he considers the act not so much in itself, as in its intention; and His rewards being of grace, not of debt, He pleased to announce his final approbation, thus: “verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall this, which this woman has done, be told a memorial of her.” MAT. xxvi, 13.

In this case faith and charity were both shewn in a manner most acceptable to God when a certain gift, value about ten pounds, was bestowed by a very poor person merely for the honor of her Redeemer; though certainly the sum might have been applied to buy clothes, food or medicine, for many a needy and afflicted creature. This cannot astonish us if we reflect, that “of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things.” ROMANS, xi 36. The Glory of the adorable being, Jesus Christ, (to whom

offering was made) is the *one object for which all the creation exists*, and is preserved, and able to do him service. Let us seriously meditate on such a scripture as the following. “Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature: for by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.” COL. i, 15—18. Let us contemplate the worship of the heavenly host, and listen to their hymn of praise. “I beheld,” says St. John, “and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousand; saying with a loud voice, worthy the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and strength, and honor, and wisdom, and glory,

and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth; and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, hear I saying, blessing and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Thou art worthy, Oh Lord! to receive glory and honor and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created Rev. v, 12—13. iv, 11. If God enables us to enter into the spirit of these revelations, we shall without any hesitation acknowledge, that THE GLORY OF OUR BLESSED REDEEMER, IS THE GREAT OBJECT FOR WHICH WE LIVE, WHETHER ON EARTH OR IN HEAVEN. Therefore when any duty or service is proposed to us, our anxious thought will be, is this what my gracious Lord and Saviour desires? Shall I honor Him by doing this; or if I neglect it, shall I seem to neglect Him? Shall I thus make His name known and shall I thus strengthen His cause in the world? Or if I refuse, shall I not be “denying Him before men,” and thus have reason to fear “He will deny me before the angels of God?”

Such reflections might be very useful; and it should also be remembered, that even the good works which are actually commanded, are only acceptable so far as they are done for Christ's sake. When he orders his disciples to assist the sick and needy, and promises to reward them, he says, "in my name," "because they believe in me," "because they belong to Christ." MAT. ix, 41, &c. *So that if there is any good in a kind action, which we may do to one of our brethren, that good must be connected with regard to the Saviour;* and in the day when he will condescend of mere grace, to reward such deeds, it will be expressly on this account, "*ye did it unto me,*" and *therefore* he will pronounce the final benediction, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." MAT. xxiv, 34.

Even in doing good, we have great reason to be very careful that we do not go wrong. It is by no means enough to have kind intentions. **GOD ALONE IS THE AUTHOR OF ALL GOOD, AND REAL BENEFITS CAN ONLY FLOW TO MANKIND, IN THE**

CHANNELS WHICH HE HAS ORDAINED. Let us hear the words of Jehovah : “Woe to the rebellious children, that *take council but not of me, and that cover with a covering, but not with my spirit.*” Is. xxx, 1. Again—“*There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the council of the Lord shall stand.*” PROV. xix, 21. Men in their pride think often that they can make the world better, and do much by education and so forth, without consulting the will of God, or asking first, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” “They shall know” saith the Lord, “whose word shall stand, mine or theirs. JERE. xliv, 28. Yea, verily “the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever; the thoughts of His heart to all generations.” Ps. xxxiii, 11. If the glory of our God and Saviour, be our simple object, in any undertaking, we may be quite sure that the *greatest possible good of all kinds will arise from it:* but if we presume to use our own judgment, without consulting the mind of our Lord, we may perhaps *seem to be doing good,* we may even intend well, but if *we could see all,* we should also *know that vanity is written over the whole work.*

This matter may be clear when explained, thus. A poor person is taken very ill, and is sick, nigh unto death; one neighbour visits him and supplies medicine, food, and other needful comforts; the patient uses them, he lingers, and dies; or he recovers, and rises up from his bed of sickness, to live as he lived before. Another neighbour, wiser and better than the former, hears of the illness of the poor man, and when he visits him, either himself, or some one more able, at his suggestion, begins at the beginning, with the disease of his soul; and the patient learns, very probably for the first time, what the true nature of sin is, its danger and corruption, and is directed to *the great Physician, the Saviour of sinners*. Now this true friend will not neglect the suffering body, but will be most kind and attentive to all the wants of a sick room, and many are the comforts which he will supply. But if the invalid is raised up again, it is not merely to work and to enjoy himself, and be as he was before, careless probably, and ungodly—no—this poor weak creature has learned on his bed of sickness, truths which he never knew before, and

which shall last for ever; and his renewed health gives him a precious opportunity of exercising repentance and faith. Thus as long as he is on earth he becomes a really valuable member of society—time is made a preparation for eternity—and in the prospect of death, he is enabled humbly to express his hope in the words of the apostle, “ We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” 2 COR. v. 1.

In such an example, we perceive at once the difference between proceeding according to the will of God, or merely according to the common feelings of one man for another suffering fellow creature. In one case, the body, which may last some ten, twenty, or thirty years, is the only thing attended to, and when death comes, all the time and pains is *utterly in vain*; moreover a *most important opportunity is lost*, and a *serious duty miserably neglected*. In the other case, the frail body is indeed kindly regarded, but what is more valuable, the soul is first considered. The latter

includes all the former—the former is good for little or nothing without the latter. Yet it is very remarkable that weak-minded or ungodly relatives, often seem to think about nothing else but the poor feeble frame, which soon they shall see no more. And if the visit of a clergyman, or other pious person is proposed, often it is put off from day to day, as if it was a thing to be avoided, until it could be escaped no longer; instead of considering it *their first and most important duty* to attend to the immortal soul of the sick person, whom they profess to love. Supposing the sick man dies, while his foolish friends, kind indeed to his perishing body, yet continue to neglect his spirit, which liveth for ever and ever; when this man from another state, and in the light of eternity, looks back upon their conduct, can he thank them? can he feel that they did their duty? may he not rather be supposed to take up the very words of the wretched person mentioned by our Lord, LUKE xvi, 27. “I pray thee father, that thou wouldest send some one to my father’s house, for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come

into this place of torment." The writer of this once visited an aged lady, who had been frequently and seriously ill; at the conclusion of the visit she said "I have been very ill, and for a long time; many of my friends have visited me, and been most kind to me. I have had many, many physicians of the body, but you are the only physician that has cared for my soul." What a sad reality! What a melancholy confession! Yet this was not a rare, but most common case. Too frequently it happens, that the friends of a sick, or even dying person, put off the "one thing needful" till it is no longer possible. Instead of giving up to God the days of health and strength, many alas! have to seek Him when body and mind are weakened and decayed. Certainly then no time is to be lost: any proper feelings, the slightest affection would seem to persuade the relatives to take care of the soul before any thing else; instead of which, very often, the Clergyman is kept away, until his services can be of little or no use. And when at last he is permitted to enter the sick room, instead of being able to utter with thankfulness and faith, "Lord now lettest

thou thy servant depart in peace, for his eyes have seen thy salvation," he is compelled to recall those words of regret and lamentation; "Oh that ye were wise, that ye would understand these things, that ye would remember your latter end." "Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things belonging to thy peace." And the melancholy scene is closed in uncertainty, fear, and darkness. It was not thus we rejoice to know, with the good woman before us. Her whole mind and heart seemed to be occupied about the salvation of her dear son, who was so early removed from her. "Oh!" she said "if I could only feel assured that he were gone to heaven, I should not weep again, but give him up most cheerfully. I am always thinking, was his soul indeed saved through Jesus Christ, and shall we meet in a better place? If I could only believe this, all other things are nothing to me." Oh! if all parents were thus anxious for their dear children, how much happiness would be gained to many families, what a blessing it would be to the whole country, and how many souls might be saved from destruction and enter the kingdom

of heaven! Yet so ignorant and careless are some fathers and mothers, that even when they have the opportunity, they will scarcely take the trouble of sending their children to a good school, where through the liberality of kind Christians, they may be properly and religiously instructed; very often they are so selfish that they will not spare them, and so lose some few pence which their little ones might earn. The day will surely come, when both the neglected child and negligent parent will repent over it, and probably in vain, for it will be then too late to recover lost opportunities. Sometimes to hear them talk, one would suppose they were doing a favor to their generous benefactors, by allowing their children to go; indeed some ungodly parents seem to care less about the instruction, because it is founded upon religion. One of these poor ignorant creatures was once heard finding fault because his son was not taught to read the Newspaper—as if one who could read the bible could not read the news. It will be well for that man if his children some day do not turn round upon him and insult him to his face, and rob him of his property.

These are the fruits he may well expect, of such a bringing up. To open a child's mind and enable him to read books, without attending to his heart, and trying to give him principles of religion, is worse than building an house without a foundation; it is like putting a sword into the hands of a madman: and all who would separate religion from knowledge, and give the last while they neglect the first, must be miserably ignorant of the real character of mankind, or wilfully opposed to the truth of God. What! shall we attempt to make a child a useful member of society, affectionate to his parents, and dutiful to all, and yet give up the only principle which can take hold of his heart; and send him forth to all the trials and temptations of the world, his head filled with ideas which probably make him proud, but his passions and feelings under no religious controul? we do our best to bring him to disgrace here, and to destruction hereafter. Poor people should bless God every day they live, if he has been pleased to provide a good school for them, where their children may be well and cheaply taught their duty to God and man. Above all things they

should value the *Sunday-School*. Clothes, tempers, and souls may be saved, by sending boys and girls regularly to the Sunday-School; and those parents who instead, allow them to run about and play, and make a noise in the streets, have a solemn account to give to their country, for this gross neglect of their duty, and a still more solemn account, before the judgment seat of God.

Again—When the children are growing up, and it becomes necessary to look out for some situation, how much depends on the first step that is taken, when they enter as it were, upon the world. Place a boy with an ungodly master, whether it be as an apprentice or a servant, and you do your utmost to ruin him. Yet how very few parents are there, who, when they are looking out for a place for their dear children, think first of their soul's health. No, they will expose them to any risk or temptation, and sacrifice any religious privileges, if they can gain a shilling or two more. Perhaps it may be thought too much to expect poor persons, who have their livelihood to gain, to be thinking first about the things which

are spiritual and eternal. Yet in this they would merely obey the merciful advice of their Saviour, who says: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." And these words may be considered, not so much a command as a *kind promise* to all who will believe and follow them, namely—that if they do seek religion first, other needful blessings and comforts shall be granted by Him, upon whom "The eyes of all do wait and who giveth them their meat in due season." PSAL. cxlv, 15. A very wise and good man has set us the result of his observation and experience in these words. "I have been young and now am old; yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." PSAL. xxxvii, 25.

We may be quite sure, that if we honor God, by believing and literally following his own word, he will find a way "to make all things work together for good." All they that put their trust in him, shall not be destitute; and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." Ps. xxxiv, 22. lxxxiv, 11. Yet it is melancholy to see how the love of gain gets the better

of those persons, who would wish to be thought religious. If a christian is true to his principles he will not enter into any business which is likely to lead him or others into sin. Yet persons who ought to know better, and without any necessity, are sometimes found opening their houses for the sale of ardent spirits, though they are well aware, that they run great risk, every day, of the sin of drunkenness, and all its horrible consequences. So likewise many, who ought to be examples to others, instead of making all the arrangements they possibly can, to save working on the Lord's-Day, just let the thing take its course, and if a word is said about it, they console themselves with answering, "these things must be done:" whereas if they had any regard for the honor of God, and the sacredness of his own day, they would soon make a total alteration in all such matters. It is *the will* that is wanting, if that was there, they would easily find *a way*.*

*We here supply a copy of a very useful paper the contents of which should be received and followed by every one who calls himself a christian.

The writer of this was once rowed in a boat, by two fishermen, who described in the most affecting manner what difficulties they had gone through,

CONSIDERING THAT THE SACRED OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S DAY, IS A SERIOUS DUTY COMMANDED BY GOD, ACCCOMPANIED BY SO MANY BLESSINGS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL, AND NECESSARY FOR THE WELFARE BOTH OF BODY AND SOUL.

The following resolutions are earnestly recommended to the inhabitants of the Parish of ***** by their sincere friend and pastor.

1. We will endeavour, by the help of God, on the Lord's Day to abstain from all business, journeys, and work, (not absolutely necessary,) from all buying and selling, and from all worldly amusements whatever.
2. We will endeavour so to manage our affairs that all persons connected with us, or under our controul, may have full opportunity of attending divine worship as often as possible— And at least once in the day.

We who are parents will also be careful to send our children regularly to the SUNDAY-SCHOOL

when first they entered "the way of life;" and among other very interesting things, what a temptation it was, when their careless and ungodly companions went out as usual, to fish on the Lord's day. They were firm in their resolution; they would not knowingly break the fourth commandment: they seemed at the time to lose a large sum of money, for such poor men: but they lived to look back upon the day of trial with thank-

and we will prevent them running about and making a noise in the street.

3. We will endeavour to make such arrangements in the necessary work of our houses, the feeding of cattle, and so forth, that these employments may interfere as little as possible with our religious duties: and we will attend constantly the house of God, unless prevented by sickness or any other unavoidable hinderance.

4. We will strive by our example and our influence to persuade others to a due observance of the Lord's Day, so essential to the present and eternal welfare of ourselves, our families, and country."

fulness, and to rejoice that the Saviour had shewn himself “able to keep them from falling;” and they found more and more, that “all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.” PSALM. xxv, 10. It is very often by making a sacrifice that the sincerity of our religion is proved; but in this country so full of trade and business, many seem really to think as those men “of corrupt minds,” mentioned by St. Paul, (1 TIM. vi, 5.) that “gain is godliness.”

How seldom does it happen that any person, supposing he has the power, chooses the place of his residence because he shall have better opportunity of serving God, and enjoying higher religious privileges for himself and his family! So also when the hiring day comes round, and lads and girls begin foolishly to think of changing their places once more; what sort of advice do they receive? Why, if their parents knew their own duty, or really cared for the happiness of their children, they would say to them, “you have got a good place, be thankful for it and remain in it;”

instead of which, if they can get a very little more wages, and often merely for the sake of changing and seeing something new, they are allowed to leave a comfortable family, to go they know not where. This they call *bettering themselves*, when it would be much more proper to say that *they make themselves worse*. This constant desire of change, and unwillingness to settle down to their proper duties, works out the ruin of many young people. Yet if their parents seem only to care about their *getting on*, without regarding *the dangers and evils* they may meet with in the way; can we be surprised if they often go astray, or fall never to rise again? The lessons of vanity and worldliness which many young women learn at home, encourage them to dress out in showy colours, and in a manner quite unbecoming their station. Young men very naturally believe that the wearers of these fine clothes, must have weak and vain minds; and thus the pride and folly displayed in dress, is the great temptation to sin. It is indeed a dreadful truth, that many parents seem more afraid that their daughters should appear poorly clothed,

than that they should disgrace themselves, sin against God, and run the risk of eternal ruin. We sometimes hear fathers and mothers lamenting when it is too late, over their children;” “He is a nice kind-hearted lad, but he has no conduct.” We long to answer; “if he is good tempered, he has not you to thank for that; if he has bad conduct, the blame is to be laid on you.” No wonder, when young people hear and see such things as they do at home, that they turn out often no better than they do: and that thus unhappiness and wickedness is continued from generation to generation.

Yet it is delightful here and there to meet with a family, who know the blessedness of serving God. Thus, when any change is necessary, or any thing important to be undertaken, the resolution of the pious Moses comes before them, “If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.” And by the mercies of His providence God answers; “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” EXODUS, xxxiii, 14—15. Under the guidance of him who can-

not lead astray, the righteous are often enabled to exclaim, "The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, yea we have a goodly heritage." Ps. xvi, 6. If anxious cares intrude, faith will recall the comfortable words of Christ: "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly father feedeth them—are ye not much better than they? Consider the lillies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, Oh ye of little faith?" MAT. vi, 26, &c. And thus amidst the various events of this changeful life, hope still looks upwards and exclaims, "surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life, and we will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Ps. xxiii, 6.

That is an excellent precept which we are taught, 1 TIM. v, 8. "If any provide not for his

own, and specially for those of his own house, (or kindred,) he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." A good father must feel and provide for his family—The more he loves them the more anxious will he be for their welfare. If he knows, (and who does not know?) that they must live for ever, his *first care* must be to secure their eternal happiness. Charity therefore is truly said to *begin at home; but true charity never ends there.* The most remarkable feature of the religion of Christ is disinterestedness, a disposition to do good upon principle, without hope of return or reward. Those solemn words, "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul!" apply *to all.* "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one sinner that repenteth;*" and every pious person upon earth, as well as the angels in Heaven, feels intensely interested about the same great and eternal object. It is therefore most satisfactory to know, that in our own favored country, there are at this time, so many Associations of Christians, formed to promote the spiritual welfare of mankind. We have societies for providing the holy

Bible, the prayer book, and other religious books and tracts, so that they may be procured easily and cheaply; as well as for sending Clergymen and visitors of the sick and needy, to populous and poor districts. There are other societies whose office it is to attend to the spiritual wants of that unhappy country, Ireland; and to provide Bibles and christian teachers, for various parts of the Continent of Europe. There are also most important and blessed institutions, "for promoting christianity among the Jews," and for sending Missionaries to the heathen. By the wise arrangements of these societies, all classes of persons, residing in any place, however remote, may enjoy the privilege of assisting in the good work; and whether they are able to give much or little, they feel an interest in, and they can benefit their brethren in the most distant parts of the earth. It is a reflection full of hope and comfort, that so many hearts and hands are now engaged in thus promoting the cause of truth and righteousness: and when we consider how many prayers and self-denying labours God has permitted His people to offer, though these things are in themselves

nothing worth, yet according to the usual course of His providence, we are encouraged to believe that “the word of God will not return unto him void,” and that “our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.”

The various meetings and sermons which through the agency of these societies are introduced into so many places, often bring a peculiar blessing with them—Information is given and hearts are warmed, and people in England learn to value their own blessings, when they compare their condition with that of many others. Moreover, pious and kind persons voluntarily go about from house to house, to distribute instructive little books upon these subjects, and to receive the contributions of those who may be disposed to assist. When these messengers of mercy arrive at any door, they should be welcomed as the servants of God. They come as the first disciples, and while their hearts’ desire and prayer is, “peace be to this house,” all members of the family should greet them in return, “Blessed are ye who come in the name of the Lord: we have wished

you good luck, ye that are of the house of the Lord." They are "fellow-helpers of the Truth," and every family that is favoured by their visits may feel that an opportunity is offered for doing the greatest good in the easiest and cheapest manner. A poor British labourer may thus become a benefactor to the Emperor of China, who, though he rules over three hundred and sixty millions of subjects, is still in want of such a precious truth as "God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This and similar eternal truths, a very poor person may be the instrument of giving to this great man, who though he seems rich, is poor indeed, until he possesses the "unsearchable riches of Christ."

It is therefore most delightful to know that the good woman, about whom we have been reading, enjoyed the opportunity at a Missionary Meeting, of hearing about the wants of the Heathen; and it is most interesting to observe, that without advice from any one, or even men-

tioning her intention, she proceeded immediately the next morning, and begged to be allowed to throw in her mite to the treasury of God. When she presented that rich offering of a poor widow related above, she merely proved her obedience to the command, and her faith in the promise of her Saviour. Some of the last words the Lord uttered upon earth were, "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world." MAT. xxviii., 19, 20. This pious woman read her Bible, she could not fail therefore to have met with these verses: perhaps they would come into her mind more forcibly than ever, after hearing the miseries of those who have never known the words which Christ ordered they should be taught. Her simple, faithful mind, would directly conclude, that no disciple of the Lord, could think of neglecting any of His commands, and especially one given in such a solemn manner, and under such affecting circumstances: and therefore she would

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consider herself bound to do *all she could to this Gospel, about which her Saviour was anxious, to all nations.* Then she would observe that He very graciously promised to His disciples *always, even to the end of the world.* Not for a few years after He spoke these words—not only with those persons who heard Him—but with all His disciples every where, even to the end of the world, while employing His own great work of preaching the Gospel. Indeed this sincere Christian could not, according to her own principles, act otherwise than she did. Being really pious and charitable, she loved God and mankind,—she felt the worth of her own soul and could not but feel that other souls were precious like her own—she also knew and believed that her divine Saviour, who had given His life for her, desired this service at her hand, and that His glory was closely connected with it. A faithful disciple “she did what she could.” I trust lest any cold hearted person, should begin to think that this poor widow did more than she ought, perhaps these considerations may be useful. Of course the great duty of a Christian is, to assist

spreading and establishing the truth of God: all those who have the Gospel of Jesus Christ are obliged to lend their help in giving it to others. Each disciple of the Lord is as the “light of the world” and salt of the earth: to him “it is given to know” the truth and grace of God, on purpose that he may disperse the darkness and purify the corruption which still hangs over and defiles this part of the creation. Then again,—the more miserable and destitute any object of compassion may be, the more are true Christians obliged to render all the help that is possible: the Saviour himself “came to seek and to save *“that which was lost”* —*“the undone, the helpless, the hopeless.”* In the parable which so kindly describes the feelings of our heavenly Father towards the penitent; great joy is called for and justified, because “the lost is found, and the dead is alive again.” A pious heart is therefore deeply affected with the degraded and wretched state of the Heathen, and feels that in proportion to their helpless misery should be the exertions to seek out and to save them. Again—Though this duty is so im-

portant, and the need so urgent, there are as yet comparatively few persons, who seem to understand their religion in this respect, and who act as if they believed that word, on which they profess to trust: therefore, those who do see this matter right, must do the more. It lately happened that the dwelling-house and buildings of a certain Farmer, were destroyed in a few hours, by the dreadful calamity of fire. As soon as this was known to the neighbours and acquaintances of the person, who had suffered so severe a loss, a subscription was immediately commenced, and in a few days, the whole sum sufficient to rebuild all that was burnt down, was easily raised: and very pleasing it was to observe the readiness, with which this act of mercy was begun and carried forward, till it was so happily concluded.

Now supposing some good christian had gone to the same persons, and to the same neighbourhood, where these subscriptions were so freely given, and had begged from door to door, for the miserable Heathen, who not only are many of them

houseless and naked, and destitute; but what is far more deplorable, are ignorant of their Saviour, know not that they may pray for the Holy Spirit, and pass their hopeless lives utterly "without God in the world." Though these unhappy beings have the strongest claims upon all who call themselves Christians, yet it is to be feared, that it would be even difficult to gather as many *shillings* for them, as there were *pounds* raised for the Farmer. The one object was before their eyes, visible and obvious; the other was far off, and never likely to be seen. The pounds were given to rebuild houses and barns, all earthly property; the shillings were required to recover and bless the immortal, yet invisible spirits, of strangers, living in a distant land, and who being now unknown, would never probably meet their benefactors, until they all assembled before the tribunal of God.

It is the privilege of a christian "to love that Saviour whom he *has not seen*, and though now he see Him not, yet, *believing* to rejoice in

Him," and His service." 1 PETER, i, 8. In like manner the christian's life is thus scripturally described; "He walks by *faith* and not by *sight*." As we are now endeavouring to trace the character of a certain pious woman, it is again satisfactory to discover, that in this matter of assisting the Missionary work so liberally, she showed herself a true disciple of Him, "who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might be made rich." She might have said in her heart, as the infidel Cain, with his lips, when the claims of the Heathen were urged upon her, "am I my brother's keeper." She knew better, and felt better than to think or speak thus. "Rivers of water ran down the eyes" of the pious Psalmist; why? because he had lost something dear to him? because he was himself a sufferer? no! simply because men "kept not the laws of God." Ps. cxix, 136. It is a good sign when any one feels so tenderly for the honour of God, as to weep for the transgression of His will. Moreover great benefits produce great gratitude: "She loved

h, for much had been forgiven her." It was
en for her comfort, that, "he which con-
th the sinner from the error of his way, shall
a soul from death, and shall hide a multi-
of sins." JAMES v, 20. And she believed
the day is at hand, when "They that be wise
shine as the brightness of the firmament;
they that turn many to righteousness, as
stars, for ever and ever." DAN. xii, 3.

CHAPTER VIII.

DEATH.

Our little history is drawing to its conclusion, and like every other earthly thing, the end of this also, must be connected with decay and death. For, from the moment that sin entered into this world, which was created "very good," God resolved that every object we behold should have vanity written over it, while the whole race of man became subject to this law, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." GEN. iii, 19. Thus all persons, whatever their character may be, are liable to be afflicted with pain and sickness, as well as other sorrows, neither "can the righteousness of the righteous deliver him at all."

As the creator maketh His sun to shine on the *evil* and on the *good*, and sendeth rain on the *just* and on the *unjust*, so likewise in regard to sufferings and death, “one event happeneth to all.” The day of separation and reward is not yet. The psalmist therefore, observes, that the wicked are often most prosperous, and “come into no misfortune like others;” while on the other hand it is no less true, that “many are the afflictions of the righteous,” and sometimes even on purpose, that the trial of their faith may be found unto praise and honor and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” 1 PET. i, 7. We must be careful therefore “to judge nothing before the time,” but wait, and “the day will declare it.” Meanwhile, we may sometimes behold with wonder the faithful Evangelist, Henry Martin, or the first blessed martyr, St. Stephen, closing their earthly course in the midst of such painful circumstances, that we cannot help exclaiming, “what hath sin wrought!” Yet, upon serious reflection we shall conclude, that in the departure of a sinner from a sinful world, even though that world be redeemed, and that sinner saved, it is

right their should be *remaining obscurity*. This is not the region of light and purity ; Heaven is the state where “there shall nothing enter that defileth,” and where “we shall see face to face, and know even as we are known.” As therefore in a ship wreck, the pious and profane may sink alike into the waves ; so when any plague or general sickness visits a country, we find that it carries off persons of all ages, and all conditions. The destroying angel slew 70,000 persons, *without distinction, when the sin of David the king fell in judgment upon the people*: and as all men are sinners, so all may justly suffer, under any general calamity.

That form of pestilence usually called Cholera, visited the town where this good woman dwelt : and while there were some, who by there intemperance prepared the way for this disease, and died miserably; she also, the sober, righteous, and godly, was smitten with the same fatal sickness. As soon as it was known that the pestilence was upon her, it was proposed to inform the Clergyman. This she positively declined; and

no persuasion would induce her to allow any one to acquaint him with her dangerous illness. Her humility, forgetfulness of self, and carefulness for others, which was so remarkable in her life, attended her even in the hour of death. Though she knew that this good man went to visit the sick and dying, and was constantly attending those afflicted with the very disease, yet she persisted that his life was too precious to be exposed to so great a risk; and she said, others needed his service more, perhaps, than she did; and especially at that time of danger and death. In this she followed the example of the son of God: even while the agonies of the cross were upon Him, His whole mind seemed to be employed about the honor of His father; He recalled His will and used His word. Christ also from the midst of the terrible sufferings of approaching death remembered His poor mother, and recommended her to the care of the Apostle. He did not neglect even the miserable men, who were engaged in his crucifixion; and some of his last words were prayers for them, "Father forgive them, or they know not what they do."

This was then perhaps a better proof of her state of *peaceful hope*, than many of the signs which some might have desired more. And if it should seem to be regretted, that we have thus been deprived of the benefit of knowing how such a Christian would die, perhaps it may be well to reflect, that she was in the hands of one who sees more clearly than we can do, what is for the best. She has been permitted *to teach us by her life*, which is far more useful and satisfactory, than what she might have said and done a few hours before she left this world.

There is often too much written and said about the last words and feelings of a poor feeble creature, whose mind and body may both probably be weakened by disease. *If persons were more careful how they lived, it would not be necessary to think so much about how they die.* It requires much knowledge of Scripture, and large experience to form a right judgment on such occasions. Persons of strong nerves, and naturally high spirits, may be expected *to appear* in a very different state of mind, from those who have

weak nerves, and low spirits. It is very easy, by loud prayers, to excite a dying penitent until he puts on the appearance of a most un-scriptural triumph. There is often much fever too, which affects the brain in such cases, and so produces many false appearances. An eminent Physician has given his opinion, that it is absolutely necessary, for a dying person to be left quiet, and nearly alone. The speaking and noise, and disturbance of many people in the room, renders the departure difficult and painful, and actually disorders the course of nature, and may oppose one of the laws of the Creator. So that if friends wish to be *very kind* to a dying relative or neighbour, they will leave him *as still as possible, keep the room very airy, and not filled with other peoples' breath, and let no one enter but for some very good reason.* "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." JAMES v, 16. The Clergyman or some other pious friend may very properly attend nearly to the last; but all should be very gentle—no shouting, and no excitement—it can do no good and may do eternal harm.

A very devoted servant of God, who had *spent a long life* in striving to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of men, in every way which his wisdom and faith could devise: when laid upon his death bed, observed one morning, more persons than usual in the room, for they had entered at the request of his nurse, who wished their assistance, as she believed his departure was at hand. Not knowing why they were there, nor exactly how many, he soon after sent for *one* of his most dear friends, and in a very serious and affecting manner, expressed his disapprobation: adding “you are all wrong, you want to see what is called *a dying scene*. *That I abhor, from my inmost soul; I wish to be alone with my God*. There I would lie before Him, as the vilest of the vile, the lowest of the low, and the poorest of the poor. Now this is what I have to say: *I wish to be alone*, dont let people come round to get up a scene.” He afterwards said, smiting three times slowly on his breast; “I am, I know, the chief of sinners, and I hope for nothing but the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, unto eternal Life; and I shall be, if not the greatest monument of

God's mercy in Heaven, yet the very next to it, for I know of none greater. I lie adoring the sovereignty of God in choosing such an one—and the mercy of God in pardoning such an one—and the faithfulness of God in perfecting His work, and performing all His promises to such an one. It is to the *principles* I look—It is upon the broad grand principles of the Gospel that I repose—it is not upon any particular promise here or there, any little portions of the word, which some people seem to take comfort from, but I wish to look at *the grand whole—at the vast scheme of redemption, from eternity to eternity*. I am not solicitous so much about this feeling or that, or this state or that, as upon keeping before me the grand purpose of God, from eternity to eternity. I do not depend upon the feelings and thoughts which are changing and uncertain, but I am kept by Him who changes not."

Another of the most zealous and laborious of Christ's disciples who indeed "served his generation and is now fallen asleep" has left us these *sentiments*. "It is a solemn thing to die: I

have no rapturous joys; but peace, a good hope through grace." On one occasion he said in his own peculiar manner, "I hope I shall creep into Heaven through some crevice in the door." And again, "If I may be permitted to drop one tear, as I enter the portals of the city of my God; it will be at taking leave of that beloved and profitable companion, *repentance*."

It is remarkable how little is written in the Bible of the *dying scenes* of many faithful persons, *whose lives are given at length*. We know nothing of the last words and feelings of St. Paul, St. John, St. Peter, or their brethren. It is simply stated that St. John Baptist was beheaded, and St. James killed with the sword; but we are not allowed to enter their prison, and intrude upon the privacy of their dying hour. There were special reasons why St. Stephen should be made an exception, as there were why his great master and Saviour should be "lifted up" in the sight of all. Generally it seems to be according to the government of God, over this fallen world, that as each spirit departs

from it to another state, there should be the same degree of light and obscurity, of peace and anxiety, of hope and fear, that is known to prevail in the other parts of human life. There is *no separatae* law and *exclusive* promise respecting the *death* of any one of the children of men. It is merely the passage from this state to another; and it may please God to make it joyous or sad, clear or gloomy, just as He in His wisdom may determine. Sometimes the last evidences of the departing believer, are very satisfactory; and for these we should be thankful: but we must not expect too much; nor attach too much importance to the presence or absence of joyous feelings. The most suitable, and probably the best state for a dying redeemed sinner, is an humble, calm, peaceful reliance upon God in Christ. And this is quite distinct from the state of the ungodly. The Scripture has clearly described the difference in this verse; “The wicked is *driven away* in his wickedness, but the righteous *hath hope* in his death.” PROV. xiv, 32.

Oh! it is most painful to see the sinner *cut short*, in the midst of his carelessness, and world-

liness, and wickedness, and *forced* to leave scene of his present enjoyment for ever—He to the least sign of health ; the least symptom very is talked over, as if all depended upon yet is there no anxiety to feel the truth of gospel; no real heartfelt sorrow for sin—repeated earnest prayer for grace—no will to meet God, nor desire for the Heaven which hath promised. All is a dull yielding to *sloth*; and so bending down before a power cannot resist, the wicked is driven away from wickedness. Alas! “if the righteous scarce saved, where shall the ungodly and the unrighteous appear?!!!” 1 PET. iv, 18.

“But the righteous hath hope in his death ‘He knows in whom he hath believed’—By ‘he seeth Him who is invisible’—He feels though he must put off this earthly Tabernacle, yet, that he has a building of God, an house made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.” can “bless the God and father of our Lord Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy *hath begotten us again unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the*

unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven, for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. 1 PETER, i, 3. He "knows that the only wise God our Saviour, is able to keep him from falling, and to present him faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy." JUDE, xxiv, And thus as "he enters upon the valley of the shadow of death, he fears no evil; God is with him, His rod and His staff they comfort him." "He falls asleep in Jesus. He dies blessed in the Lord; to awake at the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe." Ps. xxiii, 4. 2 THES. i, 10.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS.

I. TRUE RELIGION MAY BE OBSCURE.

Our story is ended. And now it may probably occur to some thoughtful mind, "surely the character of this pious woman was very remarkable: how useful and delightful it would have been to hear her own words, and to behold in her the living power of practical piety: it is to be regretted that she was not generally known."

In reply to such thoughts, it may be well to observe, that it is part of the wise plan of God, towards those whom "He hath chosen," often to keep them *retired and unknown*. When *Noah and his family*, the only faithful upon earth,

were to be protected from all the calamities which surrounded them, "God shut them in." So likewise the Psalmist, who well understood "the thoughts and ways of Jehovah," exclaims thus, "Oh! how plentiful is thy goodness, which thou has *laid up*, for them that fear thee; and that thou has prepared for them that put their trust in thee, even before the sons of men! *thou shalt hide them privily, by thine own presence, from the provoking of all men; thou shalt keep them secretly in thy tabernacle, from the strife of tongues.* Ps. xxxi, 19—20. It is no small mercy, if it be the will of God, for any one to be allowed calmly and peaceably to pass through this troublesome world, to the place of rest. And if a person be born in such an humble station, that it is not necessary that he should be at all conspicuous, it is a cause of thankfulness rather than regret. Real piety is not necessarily joined to a great name; the most excellent christians are often those who draw upon themselves the least observation. It is well known, that when the heart is heavily burthened with grief, the lips are silent; and so the soul, which is seriously

impressed with the great truths of salvation, of Heaven and eternity, will not be disposed to speak of them frequently, and lightly, but seldom, and with solemnity. We must not therefore, fall into the error of supposing, that if a person becomes religious, all the neighbourhood must know of it; on the contrary, a real friend will keep a young convert as quiet and retired as possible. In most cases, where persons are not required by their station in life to take a lead, or to teach others, the less they *talk about* their religion the better; the best way to prove that God has been gracious to them, is by "an harmless and blameless life;" by carefully and quietly performing all their duties; and then they may leave others to judge of the tree upon which such fruits flourish.

This really good woman, as observed above, "did not behave herself unseemly," she knew what became her. It never therefore occurred to her that she must make *any show* of religion: indeed one of the most striking features in her character, was this, that she seemed to think, *she was not good at all*. Surely such a state of mind

was more suitable, and more useful to her, than a desire to tell others what she felt, and so make them admire her goodness. It requires a double portion of wisdom and grace, to keep a disciple safe and right, when exposed to observation, and tried by the attention of others; and yet unhappily, at the very time when persons are least able to bear such temptation, they are oftentimes foolishly exposed to it most severely.

It is a very strong mind indeed, that can bear praise and distinction, especially if it be unusual, and connected with religion. And it is wonderful, but no less true than wonderful, that persons who think they are godly and righteous, can really feel *a secret pride while they are declaring themselves miserable sinners*: for they fancy they have *more* of the grace of God *than others*; and the smile of satisfaction on their faces seems to imply that they are taking to themselves all the comfort of that Scripture “the *secret* of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them *of his covenant*.” Ps. xxv, 14. Should we then be sorry that this humble widow was un-

known? Rather ought we to rejoice that she was mercifully kept from the peculiar trial which oftentimes hinders the progress of those who are trying to walk in the "narrow way."

It is comfortable also to reflect that "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, *the Lord knoweth them that are His.*" 2 TIM. ii, 19. Thus in the days of Elijah, when that Prophet thought he was *alone*, God rebuked his ignorance, "*I have reserved to myself 7000 men.*" So also it is recorded of a very devoted preacher of the Gospel, Martin Boos, that his eyes were first opened to perceive the truth, on visiting "a very humble and pious soul, who lived retired and unknown," and was then lying on her death-bed. This woman who had passed her life in *obscurity*, yet possessed *a secret treasure*; which through the special providence of God, she was permitted, just before her departure, faithfully to impart to one, who should himself become a "burning and shining light." In like manner we may believe that there are *many of the "hidden ones of God,"* dwelling in

clusion, unknown almost to any but their own
nily, and perhaps by them not understood,
so will one day "burst forth as the sun, in the
kingdom of their father." "Let us therefore
luge nothing before the time." "There are
many that are first who shall be last, and the
last first." The wisdom of God has determined
at the time for a *full discovery is not yet arrived*. But "*the Lord is at hand*, who both will
ing to light the hidden things of darkness,
and will *make manifest* the counsels of the
arts: and then shall every one have *praise*
of God." 1 COR. iv, 5.

I. TRUE RELIGION IS THE SECRET WORK OF GOD.

Real piety may then exist in obscurity, and
an excellent christian be allowed to pass her days
most unknown: as Christ, "the light of the
world" did not begin to shine for thirty years,
and then He enlightened the darkness of only a
few inhabitants of a very small country. *And*
the religion may begin and flourish in the soul,

unattended by any very remarkable outward appearances. “So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.” MARK, iv, 26. This was in some measure verified in the case before us; and the whole matter seems to have been so ordered, that, “no flesh should glory in the presence of that God who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.”

An humble woman is discovered “working out her own salvation, with fear and trembling;” and God is declared “as working in her both to will and to do of His own good pleasure.” PHIL. ii, 12. This then is an example which any serious enquirer after Truth may follow. There is nothing marvellous to astonish or alarm: all is plain and probable and practical.

St. Paul was converted by a miracle; there was a light and a voice proceeding from the Lord himself. We see the meaning of this afterwards.

There is a fitness in every work of God; the means are always suited to the end. Generally it would be any thing but useful or proper that converts should be visited in this way.

Our Lord was aware of the disposition there is in mankind to expect something marvellous in religious matters, and He often reproved this fault, especially once when he said, “except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” It is *pride* that causes people to wish for these signs and wonders *in their own case*; they like to have something remarkable that they may speak of, and that others may admire in them. They are not contented to enter “the straight gate, and walk along the narrow way” in a common manner, but they would be *distinguished*; and so very often they invent or imagine what never happens. It is instructive to observe in this good woman, all the goodly fruits of vital faith, without any of those weeds of “bitterness which often spring up to trouble us.” And when we rise from reading this story, any one may feel, that this is a *simple instance of real god-*

liness; that nothing happened *here*, wh
not be found *elsewhere*; and that the
is such as may be imitated by *all*. T
widow has nothing brilliant about her:
not set up to be gazed upon: it is no
what was the immediate cause of her con
she is found walking in “the command
and ordinances of the Lord,” and as i
she is visited with a blessing. No huma
ment is magnified, all the praise must be
red on Him to whom alone it is due;
moral of the whole is written thus:—“
glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

III. TRUE RELIGION IS SHEWN IN COMMON

As the Gospel of Jesus Christ is th
gift of God to this fallen world, so are th
sions it contains, suited to all the vari
cumstances in which mankind are found.
ever there is a human heart and a Bible,
the materials for producing one of the mo
lent things that is known upon earth—

Christian. Religion, therefore, is not to be looked for in a certain number of *extraordinary actions*, still less is it *only* to be expected on *great occasions*, at the season of prayer, and on the sabbath-day. If we have read this book carefully, we shall observe that *when once the right principle is implanted in the heart, it will be shewn in many very common things*. It is useful, indeed very necessary, to attend to this; for many persons seem, if we may so say, to wait for *some great opportunity* to shew their piety. There is no need to wait at all. "Now is the accepted time," may any christian say, every day, when he begins his common duties.

This humble woman never enjoyed great occasions of shewing how good she was. She was too really good, to seek for, or desire such occasions. Indeed the only one which seemed to be in her power, a death-bed scene, she utterly declined; while she refused not to do, most diligently, in her own quiet way, the simple duties and works of charity she could. This book is not then written, for a favoured few, but for all who

will read it. And any serious person who has improved what is contained in it, will be much encouraged by the example given. *Any one* may feel it possible, through the grace of God, to arrive at the same knowledge, ability, and usefulness, as this poor widow. The facts and reflections are intended for general use. No one may say "how can these things be," but rather "Oh! that I were as good as she was." And why should you not be? The same Bible, the same ordinances, the same duties, the same promises are open to you also. Delay not therefore till God shall "do some great thing" for you. You are alive, there is hope. "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." "Ask and it may be given you." "Seek and you may find." Account that the long suffering of the Lord is salvation, who is not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance. 2 PET. iii, 9.

IV. TRUE RELIGION IS REAL DIGNITY.

There is an evil in the present world, which *the truth of God alone* has power to remove.

Many objects appear in a *false light*, and few things are esteemed according to their *real value*. This statement may surprise some who think themselves worldly-wise. Yet it is a fact, that the cleverest of men often make the most disgraceful mistakes in judging of the worth of that which is most important. Who knows best; God or man? Now God has said, “what shall it profit a man if he gain *the whole world, and loose his own soul?*” The Lord of life pronounces the soul of more value than all the world.

Is this the general opinion? Alas! too often are we forced to recall those words: “That which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God.” This little history then would be useful, if it only tended to correct a common error, and to shew *the supreme excellence of true religion*. Upon whomsoever this gift is conferred, that person, without regard to any other earthly circumstance, may be considered to have reached *the highest dignity of which human nature is capable*. When God “chooses the poor of this world, rich in faith, that they may be heirs

of his promised kingdom," he does in reality confer upon them the most distinguished honor, and they become noble indeed. It is most delightful to dwell upon such a truth—To consider attentively the value of the immortal spirit—To be assured that if that spirit is renewed and saved, all other outward circumstances are as nothing in comparison. These profitable thoughts may arise in our minds on reading the narrative above.

It is thus proved beyond all question, that the most elevated and admirable features in the christian character may be exhibited under circumstances the most common and lowly. It would be well indeed for many of the rich and noble of the land, if they had attained to the *same moral dignity* as this poor widow. The gospel of Jesus Christ received into the heart, and ruling in the life, alone can raise them to this degree of virtue. This gospel is offered to all: it is in a special sense, "preached to the poor." Its effects, therefore, may be expected to prevail largely amongst them, And *religion actually may be seen in all its beauty, and all its glory, among the lowest of the human race.*

He therefore who is called to minister the Holy Gospel, as he looks forth upon his congregation, of whomsoever it consists, may derive consolation from reflecting; that he is working on the very material from which "the spirits of the just are perfected," and is preparing the beings whom he teaches, that they may one day be "made equal to the angels of God." And the poor themselves, for whom this book is written, should thus learn to think less of worldly pleasures and riches: should strive to attain *that real good*, which through Christ is offered to them all; and passing contentedly and peaceably through life; should look forward to the time, when, whosoever shall have done the will of God, shall be acknowledged by the Lord of all, as one of His best friends and dearest relations, while from His hand they receive the crown of glory, which fadeth not away."

MAT. xii, 50. 1 PET. v, 4.

V. TRUE RELIGION IS PRACTICAL.

The incidents and reflections which have passed before us, may also suggest that real and.

scriptural religion exercises a practical influence over the whole conduct.

One great design of God in all the full provisions of the gospel, is, to produce in each believer *a new moral character*. The sacrifice for sin is offered and accepted; and through the atonement of the son of God, a free forgiveness of all sin, original and actual, is proclaimed to the transgressor. “Receiving Christ,” the sinner is pardoned, and also made partaker of the righteousness of God in Him.” Through this union with the Saviour, the Holy Spirit according to promise, exerts His gracious power: the christian “being in Christ is made a new creature,” and is enabled to bring forth “the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus, unto the glory and praise of God.” 2 COR. v, 17. PHIL. i, 11. Now these blessings of redemption promised of God, as well as repentance and faith required of man, all tend to the same result, viz: the creating another character in a sinful being, and fitting a disordered and defiled soul for the service and blessedness of Heaven.

We have scriptural reason to be very anxious that we receive Christ," that we "be found in Him, and led by the Spirit of God." The precept of the Apostle is "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; *know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.*" 2 COR. xiii, 5. "Am I born again of the spirit of God?" "Being justified by faith, have I peace with God? Is the love of God shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost?" "Is Christ in me the hope in Glory?" These are momentous and spiritual questions; and they require a large portion of the "wisdom that is from above," rightly to answer. The subject itself is in its very nature, secret and mysterious. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit." JOHN iii, 8.

In examining then the state of our souls, and the operations of the Spirit of God upon them, we should be affected with "reverence and godly

fear." We should not presume to intrude into the mysteries, which may not be revealed. "Secret things belong to God." We should never talk of such solemn matters in a common and light, or bold and daring manner. It is possible to "grieve the Spirit of God," by thinking and speaking improperly of His mysteries, as well as by any other sin. It should also be remembered, that light and grace are granted *variously* by the supreme wisdom of God; and it is not becoming in us feeble and short sighted, to pronounce *positively* upon such a subject. The evidences which are desired, are not always proportioned to the piety of the person in whom they are sought for. Much depends upon various circumstances, some of which may be discovered, others may not be revealed till the day of judgment. Constitutional infirmity, or strength, peculiar temptations, or assistances, and other ingredients, enter into the subject of enquiry: these can be known only to the person who experiences them, and imperfectly even to him. Moreover "The Spirit divideth to every man severally, as He will." And in this respect "who hath known the mind

of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?" 1 COR. xii, 11. ROM. xi, 34. Assuredly upon a subject so mysterious as the secret work of God upon the soul, instead of trying to have it all plainly laid out and exhibited to our vain curiosity, thereby gratifying pride and encouraging presumption; it would be far more becoming and profitable to take our place beside the man who being admitted into the third Heaven and acquainted with many mysteries, knew where to limit his enquiry, when he exclaimed; "Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Our Lord knew how much more agreeable it is to the natural mind to speculate about mysteries, than to perform common duties, and therefore he gave forth this plain rule: "By their fruits ye shall know them." Is that disciple's heart renewed? Is he a Christian indeed? Let us judge of what we cannot see by that which is *visible and obvious*. What are his dispositions, and tempers, and habits? How does he perform his various daily duties? Is his obedience constant and con-

scientious? What is the great object for which he seems to live? Such enquiries are really useful—such evidences are scriptural, and practical. Whereas it is not uncommon for persons who have got a little knowledge of the gospel, to talk very confidently about *the time of their conversion, and to neglect the very purpose for which conversion is granted.* If “it is given unto you to believe,” if God has “called you out of darkness into His marvellous light,” if He has “taken away your heart of stone and given you a heart of flesh;” can you suppose that this great work is done chiefly to be the subject of conversation? No! If thus the first principle of religion is implanted in your heart, it is that *you should bring forth much fruit:* “herein is the Father glorified: so shall ye be proved disciples of Christ.”

No real Christian ever feels, that by once “turning unto God” *all is as it were done:* neither will he be *constantly looking back to the moment* when he may suppose he experienced a change of heart, and *from thence* derive his comfort. Rather like the Apostle, “*Forgetting*

those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, he will press toward the mark for the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus." PHIL. iii, 13, 14. He will remember that his "*Light should shine;*" that others should see *his good works;* and that if "*chosen of Christ;*" it is expressly that he should "*bring forth fruit, and that his fruit should remain,*" be abiding and permanent. A well instructed disciple learning religion from the word of God, assisted by an able and pious Minister, will consider the revealed truths or *doctrines of the Gospel* of the highest importance; will be most anxious to obtain *a clear and accurate knowledge* of them; and will desire to be "*ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope* that is in him, with *meekness and fear*, having a good conscience." 1 PET. iii, 15. But he will also consider that all the *doctrines of the gospel are practical;* and that they are made known to us, that they may be *principles of conduct.* If any one therefore makes them the subject chiefly of *speculation and discussion;* and use the grace

given, merely as an opportunity of *talking over* what God has done, or may intend to do in the soul; this is to defeat the very object for which the gift is granted, and in a certain sense it is “receiving the grace of God in vain.”

If the mind of any child of man be enlightened, and his heart renewed, it is with this express design, that he should “*walk*” (or constantly live and act) “worthy of his vocation,” and “*shew out of a good conversation, his works with meekness of wisdom.*” JAMES iii, 13. It is far more important for any one to be sure that *he is now* living an holy and moral life, than that *he once* received certain religious impressions. It is very easy to be mistaken in the latter, while the former is obvious and easy to be discovered. Besides if God was pleased to visit the conscience by His Spirit, this was done on purpose that the whole course of life might be improved. There are evil tempers to be corrected—bad habits to be subdued—the whole conduct to be put in order—and the various duties of every day to be properly and conscientiously performed. The cre-

ator has so ordered it that our characters are gradually formed by practice. *If we would be truly religious, we must act out our religion in daily duty.* “We *do* learn of the doctrine by doing the will of God,” but we *do not* do the will of God, by learning the doctrine only: for it is one thing *to know what is right* and another thing *to perform what we know.* Even an Apostle confesses, “the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do.” Rom. vii, 19. We must beware then, lest we mistake the knowledge of the head, for the obedience of the heart; and must remember, that the virtuous habits produced by grace, are strengthened by action, *while the appointed way for our becoming better, is the keeping the commandments of God.*

Let us consider the case of this simple minded woman; she seemed to see at once that religion is a practical matter: she had no idea of believing and not doing: she was concerned not so much about her *feelings* as her *actions.* And we who read her history, when we observe her simplicity, humility, industry, order, cleanliness, and econ-

omy; disinterestedness, patient continuance in well doing, peaceable activity, propriety of behaviour, and enlarged charity, cannot fail to perceive the close union that subsists between piety and morality: and we must acknowledge, that while no real virtue can exist apart from the principles of religion, whosoever professes to be religious, ought also to be exemplary in conduct. The attempt, in this respect, to separate what God has joined for ever, is one of the signs of the times, and a most alarming one it is. The unbeliever (in heart, though not perhaps in word) resolves that men shall be made what they ought to be, without the faith of the gospel: while the high professor of the truths of the Bible is too often an indifferent husband or father, master or servant, neighbour or subject.

We shall learn a very useful lesson from this little book, if by reading it, we are enabled to establish in our minds this truth:—**RELIGION IS A PRINCIPLE OF CONDUCT.**

It would be well if in our Sunday and other

Schools, for the education of the poor, this truth was more attended to. It is to be feared that *too much* time is often spent in teaching children what they are *to believe*, and *too little* in teaching them how they are *to behave*. Their minds indeed must be opened; but their wills must also be brought into subjection: head and heart must be improved together. No experienced Teacher can doubt which part of the work is the most difficult. Many a clever and proud child will easily learn the chief doctrines of Christianity, and delight to shew his knowledge: but insist upon his strict obedience to certain rules and positive commandments, and there comes forth idleness, self will, and rebellion. Since then it is certainly much easier to teach a young person to repeat the creed accurately on the Sunday, than to perform the various duties of the whole week, submissively and punctually; it is quite clear that more time should be given than often is, to that part of instruction which is *practical*. It should never be forgotten that mankind are nearly as ignorant of *the strictness of the law of God*, and *the particulars of obedience*, as they are

uninformed about the great truths of the Saviour and Sanctifier. They must be taught the one and the other. "Line upon line and precept upon precept," is requisite in both cases.

Especially young people should never be allowed to go away satisfied with knowing what is right, unless they are also *decidedly prepared to do it*. They should have it always impressed upon them, that religious knowledge is intended for virtuous *practice*—they should never be encouraged to make a profession until experience has proved they are *sincere*. Good desires and feelings they should be taught to consider as worth little or nothing, unless they be proved and confirmed by a conscientious daily conduct. Where the mind is enlarged, and there is some acquaintance with the doctrines and facts of the Bible, there is need of *a double portion of rigid discipline*. "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing;" and unless it be united to a *strict government of the actions*, it will certainly produce *evils of its own*. Vanity and self importance must be subdued by constant performance of par-

ticular duties: the one corrects and regulates the other. Many a young disciple, who seems to promise well, is hindered or spoiled by injudicious treatment. As soon as symptoms of piety appear, foolish people make a noise about it, and cause the inexperienced convert, to think himself an hero, when in fact he is only an ignorant and sinful being, awakening to see a little of truth and righteousness.

The friends of the education of the poor have great reason to pay serious attention to this matter. It is often said, "what good have all your schools done? Do the children brought up in them, turn out better than those who never had all this instruction? Are your pupils more moral and virtuous, and correct, than other young people?" We are forced to confess, that in many instances, we are sadly disappointed; and one chief reason no doubt, why our Sunday and other schools, do not produce more good is this, that the parents at home and the teachers at school, do not pay due attention to the practical part of education—*controlling the will, directing the*

conduct, and forming the behaviour. A young person after a course of instruction, in a christian school, enters upon a situation certainly with great advantage, it may be, even with a religious character. It is reasonably expected, that any one so brought up, will prove industrious, peaceable, obliging, humble, cleanly, orderly, and correct in the performance of every duty. Instead of which, it too often happens, that others with less learning and perhaps no profession, are really more diligent, conscientious, respectful, faithful, good tempered, and well behaved, than those who *know* so much, and *do* so little.

How are we to explain this? We must not hastily conclude that there is hypocrisy, or even wilful ignorance in such cases. The fact is, that young people are not taught distinctly, to be slow in declaring themselves religious, until their religion is proved by their conduct. Profession is made too easy a thing. They do not understand that impressions and desires are almost nothing, unless they are carried into practice. They are suffered to mistake *the very nature of religion*,

which consists not in the experience of certain feelings, or the performance of certain acts of worship ; but in a new moral character—a heart and life occupied in the service of God, and in the discharge of every appointed duty. Indeed we must be very careful, or one of the best efforts of christian benevolence may be brought into disrepute, and the gospel will have to bear the blame of faults which arise from ignorance or abuse of it.

Let therefore, christian education be *practical, particular, and positive*—Let religious knowledge be esteemed as *inseparably connected with virtuous practice*—Let every doctrine be considered as commanding the corresponding duties. Thus we may remove one of the great “offences ;” prevent “the way of truth from being evil spoken of ;” and “by the good works which others shall behold, cause them also to glorify God.”

VI. TRUE RELIGION IS SCRIPTURAL.

The most valuable possession which exists in the world, is the Holy Bible. The cottage where

this blessed book is understood and believed, is better furnished than the most sumptuous palace of an heathen or ungodly prince, where the Scriptures are unknown or neglected. God has ordained His own word to be the grand instrument for the improvement and final perfection of the human race. Separate from this source of wisdom, all other efforts are comparatively worthless, all other hopes are vain. "*The way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,*" JER. x, 23. It is both arrogance and ignorance for a being so disordered in body, mind, and spirit, to attempt to renovate that which is irrecoverably wrong, unless the creator Himself be pleased to sanction and to bless. Now the Bible is the chosen agent of God, for the moral and spiritual benefit of our fallen race. Within its sacred pages there is gathered together by divine wisdom, just so much of doctrine, fact, and precept as the Deity saw was necessary: it is also arranged in that manner which He considered most suitable to the various circumstances of the beings whom he proposed to teach; and while there are written in Holy Scrip-

ture, truths so simple, "that he may run who readeth them," there are also revealed mysteries of knowledge which admiring angels "stoop down to look into."

In every country where the Bible is known and possessed as the rule of faith and practice, it exercises unseen influence over the general opinions, customs, and conduct of the inhabitants: and a people will always be found moral and virtuous, in exact proportion, as Divine Truth is read, known, and believed.

The word of God is granted not merely to supply the great doctrines and grand principles of revealed religion; but it is designed to teach us the *particulars of obedience, to superintend the education of the young, and regulate the daily conduct of those of maturer years.* The solemn charge delivered more than 3000 years ago, to the only nation who then enjoyed this blessing, is now addressed to us. "Ye shall lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul; and ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when

thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up." DEUT. xi, 19. Our religious creed must be strictly conformed to this perfect standard of truth: "the Holy Scriptures alone are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 TIM. iii, 15. From the same source we must also derive the moral precepts and rules which are to direct our actions every day. *We know neither, until we are taught: and a constant application of the word of God is requisite, in order to overcome our natural propensity to error and evil, both of doctrine and practice.*

One of the highest blessings enjoyed by any congregation is, a constant, faithful, and full exposition of Holy Scripture: while every prejudice of the natural mind, and every human system is made humbly to bow before the entire declaration of the "whole counsel of God." Every religious community that has fallen into error, has been suffered to go astray because the word of God was kept back or perverted; and every such commu-

nity that has been reformed and restored, (as the Church of England, about 300 years ago) has been so reformed and restored, by bringing to light, and acknowledging the authority of the word of God. And so also every separate parish, and every family, and individual, is enlightened and improved by precisely the same means. The first requisite in a christian teacher is, that he should well understand the truth of God. To every one called to the high office of ministering the word, St. Paul says, “Give attendance to reading, to exhortation to doctrine; take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them, for in *doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.* 1 TIM. iv, 13—16. While the congregation are required to follow the example of the primitive disciples who “received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily.” ACTS, xvii, 11.

Many professed Christians, “make the word of God of none effect, by their traditions,” (i. e. ancient opinions or usages, some contrary to the letter, and some to the spirit of the Bible:) and

others neglect the Holy Scriptures, and instead they examine into, and talk over their own inward desires and feelings; and so "make void the law of God," by the rules and fancies of man. But he who is "PERFECT," (i. e. fully instructed in the mysteries of God, 1 COR. ii, 6. EPH. iv. 11—13. PHIL. iii, 12—15. HEB. v, 14.) as a teacher will be careful "rightly to divide the word of truth; and will earnestly desire that "the faith of his hearers should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." 1 COR. iii, 5. And he who is "PERFECT," as a disciple, will "receive with meekness, the engrafted word, (i. e. implanted in the heart) able to save the soul." This he will acknowledge as a "lamp to his feet and light to his path; and though other devices may seem to lead on at a quicker pace, or to point out a more "excellent way," he will remember that the pages of the Bible, were written expressly for our learning, that we, *through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.*" ROM. xv, 4.

It is by the faithful improvement of the word

of God, that we are encouraged to expect the divine blessing. Other means being more agreeable to the prejudices and feelings of men, will of course seem sometimes more successful; just because they accord with the natural disposition. Whatever is built on this foundation, will suffer loss, and may be finally rejected in the day of trial; but the incorruptible seed, though buried or blighted for a season, will prove in due time, that it liveth, and abideth for ever. 1 COR. iii, 15.

1 PET. i, 23.

The pages of this little volume may serve to shew the sort of influence which Holy Scripture should exercise over the universal opinions and actions of mankind. The good woman, some of whose words and works are here recorded, may be considered as an example selected from the multitude of persons, who possess the Bible. We find on examination that her character is remarkable: we proceed and are almost surprised at some of her excellent principles and conduct; we continue the enquiry and discover, *that every good thing she knew or did, was good in exact proportion*.

portion as it was scriptural. There is no piety in the world, no morality worthy of the name, save that which is scriptural. The Bible supplies the motive, and the rule of all virtue. Thus the child “learns to grow in favor with God and man;” and every one in his station to perform his proper duty in the very manner and the very spirit which is best.

It is delightful to reflect, that while this humble woman was seated like Mary, listening to the Saviour’s word, and striving to fulfil what she thus learned, in her daily practice, she had commenced a work which shall not pass, but shall be proved eternal: for while “all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass—the grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away, **THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURETH FOR EVER.”** 1 PET. i, 24—25.

And now, my reader, pray for the gracious blessing of God upon this little book—To Him it is presented—by His power alone it can be useful—His truth written in the very “words which the

Holy Ghost teacheth," is recorded in every page. These words are quick and powerful, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart, and effectually work in those who believe." Receive them "not as of men but of God," and thus expect His blessing.

This volume has been composed with a sincere desire for your benefit; to point out some duties which may be overlooked; to correct some errors which may not be perceived; and to show, however imperfectly, something of the character of scriptural piety and practical religion. It has been endeavoured so to arrange the whole, that the example and the precepts might be adapted for general use. And throughout, there has been an humble effort to exalt, not man, but God.

Do you feel an interest in this good woman's character? My reader, there is a near relationship between all the members of the family of God. They may be separated a little longer; but wait a while, and "They shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the

south, and sit down in the kingdom of God ; and their names and characters shall be recorded more worthily than in these perishable pages—They shall be written for eternity “in the Lamb’s Book of Life”.

Finis.





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A SERMON,

Preached at the opening of the
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